C. E. Dashwood.

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JOHN AND MARTHA DANIELS

157

THE

EASTERN HUNTERS.

THE CAMP. [*Frontispiece.*

THE

EASTERN HUNTERS.

By CAPTAIN J. T. NEWALL,

AUTHOR OF "JOHN NEVILLE: SOLDIER, SPORTSMAN, AND GENTLEMAN."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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PREFACE.

THE following narrative of sport and adventure is mainly a compilation of actual occurrences. Many —indeed, most of the sporting incidents recorded in the body of the work are derived from my own journals and note-books, and, in general, are stated much as they took place under my own observation.

For a few, I am indebted to the experiences of others; some of these I have filled in to suit my plan of rendering the accounts as varied as possible, compatible with reality and fact.

The account of one sporting feat—that of the successful right and left shot at tigers—I have preferred giving exactly as it was originally written. It is an extract, word for word, from the journal, now in my possession, of a lamented brother; and, I

need hardly say, was never written with a view to publication.

From the same source I have derived the details attending the engagement with the last tiger whose death is recorded in these pages.

It is not professed that all the note-worthy incidents narrated took place during one expedition. I have included the most remarkable of several by making selections from my various journals.

With regard to the anecdotes related by one or other of the hunters themselves, it will be readily discerned that a few must be taken *cum grano*. I have, however, endeavoured to distinguish between the latter and those which, from my personal knowledge, I know to be true; or which, having been related to me as such by others, I believe to be so.

Such little incidents as "Tiger leg-mutton," "stewed-eel soup," &c., are facts.

I trust, therefore, that being as it is, for the most part, a narrative of adventure, it will be deemed not only of interest to the sportsman, but worthy of perusal by the general reader; though I

have certainly failed in describing the scenes as graphically as I could wish.

Let it not be supposed that the bag of the Eastern Hunters is immoderately large.

Captain Rice has given an idea of the abundance of game in Rajpootana. In the remote parts of that country and throughout Central India, the jungles teem with wild animals.

In less favoured places also, or those better known, or more easily reached by the sportsman, game increased during the year of, and after, the mutiny in an extraordinary degree. Officers were too much engaged in more important affairs during those years to make up the usual hot weather hunting-parties, by which the wild beasts of a district are in a measure kept down.

In the early part of 1859 it was my fortune to travel by myself through a wild part of Rajpootana. During the march, hearing that game was to be found in the vicinity of my camp, I, on two occasions, took out a few beaters without having made any preliminary arrangements. During the first, I

saw two tigers and two bears ; and two tigers and one bear were aroused in the second beat. Indeed, it was on the former occasion that the laughable scene with the bears—the first described in the following pages—took place. I was assured by some of the men that if I could wait and visit a river some miles distant, they would engage to show me four or five tigers in a beat. Unfortunately this I was unable to do.

I mention this in proof of the abundance of wild animals to be found in the wilder districts.

In the following narrative I have endeavoured to give an idea of the systems both of "pugging" and "marking." These, one or both, are necessarily the means by which an animal is traced to his lair, though the actual mode of operating may somewhat vary in different districts. The Mahrattas of the hill country of the Deccan are especially clever at marking in the way I have described, but are inferior as "trackers" to the shikarees of some other provinces. I have therefore combined the characteristic features of different districts.

The use of a few Hindustanee words I have found unavoidable; but they are very few, and in each instance followed by the translation.

Such phrases as "your excellency," "your worship," "your honour," though not strictly and literally correct, will serve to represent the exaggerated terms in which natives are in the habit of addressing their superiors.

The illustrations are from drawings of my own, which, being without any pretension to merit, are merely intended to assist the reader in realising some of the scenes described. The regular established feature of Indian scenery—the cocoa-nut or palm—will be looked for in vain. I have not introduced them, because they do not prevail in the parts of the country depicted.

It has been my endeavour to describe the adventures naturally, and without investing the hunters with any attributes of mock heroism. They are not pourtrayed as heroes of romance, but simply as hearty English sportsmen—in fact, men, of which Her Majesty's forces in India afford numerous specimens.

I have appended a few observations on the various animals referred to in this work. It will be at once perceived that they are more those of a sportsman than a naturalist, to which title, I regret to say, I can make no claim.

With these preliminary observations I launch the book to sink or swim on its own merits.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE EASTERN HUNTERS.

CHAPTER I.

Astray in the Jungles—The art of "tracking"—The Hunter's Camp.

'Well, I'm fairly bothered!' Here's a path straight on and one to the right, and another to the left, but not a sign to show which is the likeliest to lead to our camp, and after wandering over these interminable, monotonous, brown, jungle-covered hills, I confess I have not the faintest conception as to the points of the compass. What say you, **Norman?**"

The above was addressed by a large, powerful-looking man, riding a great country-bred mare, to the nearest of two companions, who, following in his immediate wake, had been riding in single file along the narrow track, which enabled them, with some difficulty, to thread their way through the thick, entangled jungle. It was but a mere rent

through the thickets, by means of which the wood-cutters from the adjacent villages found access to their neighbours, and to the densest portions of the well wooded hills, and frequently had the travellers been obliged to dismount, to remove some intruding branch or other obstacle which blocked up the passage to horsemen.

It was at a point where the path they had been pursuing branched off in three directions, leading probably to as many villages, that the leader of the party had now pulled up, undecided in which to continue.

"Hereaway must be the east, of course. Mark how the shadows fall," responded the individual addressed, a small but actively made man, mounted on a clever looking little Arab horse. "The sun is only some three hours high, so we can't well mistake in that respect. But where the tents may be is quite another thing. I should be inclined, though, to take the right-hand path, Mac. Remember the natives at the village before we entered these hills said the river there was the same as that at Mungaum, where our camp is supposed to be, and that we should have to cross it. I think our best plan will be to strike it as soon as possible. We can then follow its course, or hit the road."

"I agree with you, Norman," said Hawkes, the

rearmost rider. "Let us get out of these accursed hills by all means. Those Hottentots are sure to prove hostile. We should have been at the throats by then, if we had only stuck to the cart track—bad though that was."

"All very well to plead that now, old mate, but I have an intense objection to the theory of the pleasant rural path; or, for master editor, for master of that respect Mackenzie. But in the name of all the pagan gods, whoever they are, which road am I to take?" +

"As we left the river on our right, I suppose it must be there still," said Norman. "I vote for the rocky-looking path. Whether the proper one or not, it will bring us nearer to the plain."

"So be it then," said Mackenzie, turned into that meaning to the right. "A mule saved is certainly not necessarily time gained. The old mare, too, seems to approve of your selection, Norman, and she has a wonderful nose for water."

Another quarter of an hour's riding fortunately brought our three travellers to a ridge overlooking what they took to be the stream referred to. This they forded, and getting on more level ground on the other side, shortly came upon an almost disused cart track.

"We are all right," said Norman, decisively, after

examining intently for a few seconds some foot-prints which here and there appeared in the sand or looser portion of the soil. "This is the road."

"How do you know that for certain?" inquired Hawkes, whose appearance, less bronzed and more boyish than that of his companions, proclaimed his Indian experience to be some few years less than theirs. "I see a lot of camel footprints; but how do you know they are ours?"

"Mark, learn, and inwardly digest," was the reply. "Do you see this horse's footprint or 'pug,' as we usually call an animal's track?"

"Yes, I see it. But what about it?"

"What about it? Look at it. Don't you see the impression of the shoe?" questioned the instructor.

"Well, I'm sure I don't know. It all looks like one that mark to me. Ah, yes! here I think I can make out the edge of the shoe," continued Hawkes, as he looked more attentively. "It seems to have that appearance, though I could not be certain."

"That's right; it is so. An English one, is it not?"

"I suppose so. But what then, Norman?"

"I know by that our horses have passed here," was the reply. "The natives, you know, do not use shoes like ours. They are much broader and

flatter, covering a great deal more of the land and such patches as the various absent lords probably ... Certainly on the estates, though belonging to one lord or another, of the neighbouring towns."

"I don't think I could tell the difference generally," said Hawkes.

"You'll learn that in time. Take every opportunity of examining the pegs as you go along, and you'll soon acquire an eye for distinguishing them, and also it the impression is recent or the reverse. But see, there are other signs of our people. Here are the prints of two small dogs evidently not those of the country, and not left by Mr. Mugg. And again here. These are not the marks left by the usual rat-eye shoes of the people of the district, and must belong to your Portuguese servant."

"Well, when you have finished your instruction," growled Mackenzie, who was getting a little impatient at the length the lesson in tracking seemed likely to last, "I vote we move on. At present I consider breakfast decidedly more important than the acquisition of knowledge by your promising pupil, Norman. Let him mix a few, and learn and inwardly digest after we've eaten and drunk. You are satisfied we are on the road, suppose at present we make the best use of that scrap of knowledge

"Ah, Mac!" retorted Norman, reproachfully, "you never would take the trouble to learn pugging, though it is so essential an acquirement in woodcraft. If you had not me to look after your erring ways sometimes, you would be a lost man. Be thankful, you graceless giant, for all your mercies, and let Hawkes improve his youthful mind in learning what is so desirable. However, shove along. We can't be very far from the tents, I should say, if miles are computed at less than double their proper length in these parts. For I certainly make this last stage to be near about twice as many coss as it was stated to be."

Thus encouraged, Mackenzie again led off at a good round canter, followed at respectful distances, to avoid the full flavour of the dust, by the other two. Another mile and a half did in fact bring the party in view of the tents; and the ready syces rushed from their quarters near the horse-pickets to seize the bridles of their charges.

Well pleased indeed were all three to dismount from their wearied sweating hacks, and seek the pleasant shade of the tents. For the month was May, and the sun, though but a few hours high, intensely hot. The riders had been in their saddles for many hours, having accomplished, on horses previously posted for the purpose, about fifty miles

since they started, a couple of hours before dawn.

All three were officers of one of the regiments stationed at that flourishing station, Jehangeerpore, and had obtained a month's leave of absence, which space of time they intended to devote to the destruction of as many tigers, bears, and other game as they could possibly manage to annihilate. The first stage of their proceedings was, as we have seen, completed by their arrival at the camp whence they purposed commencing operations.

Though it must be acknowledged that the natives of India are not usually gifted with a keen perception of the beauties of natural scenery, or imbued with any particular appreciation of the picturesque, yet there are certain requirements connected with camp life, which not unfrequently cause them to select decidedly pretty spots for the encampment. This happens without any pre-arranged intention on their part of so doing, or after consciousness of having done it. Situations tolerably elevated or airy, shade of trees, and vicinity of water, are the agents by which this—to the masters—desirable end is accomplished. A spot combining these necessaries is sought ; and hence the most eligible in those respects is, at the same time, usually picturesque.

On the present occasion it had been selected with great judgment. A small grove of mangoes, with several isolated trees of the same kind scattered in the immediate vicinity, offered a fine amount of shade. They stood on open ground near the bank of the river, and thus water and free circulation of air were also secured. About twenty yards from the grove, the bank sloped down towards the water —in that part a long deep pool. This was belted by a narrow strip of brilliant green, contrasting strongly with the parched appearance of the yellow grass above.

On the opposite side of the pool small trees and shrubs, jutting out or depending from above, bathed their hanging branches in the water, while behind them the bank rose to some height. Some open land separated the river from a belt of forest-trees which extended to the foot of a range of jungle-covered, ravine-cleft hills. Beyond these again rose others, all well wooded with low brush and occasional trees. Range on range, spliced one into the other, thus filled up the background : in some places rising abruptly into points or peaks ; in others flat, with sheer descents at either end of the table-land.

The neighbouring village was situated lower down on a salient angle, round which the river swept, about two hundred yards from the little camp.

The huts of which it was composed were well sheltered by tamarind, mango, and peepul trees, which grew thickly in and around it. It was on the same side of the river as the camp, the intervening space being cleared and cultivated. Fields, now mostly fallow, also extended for a considerable distance around, and these were dotted with trees and wells, the latter used for purposes of irrigation.

At this season, the very middle of the hot weather, the rivers attain their smallest dimensions. The one I am describing now consisted of a succession of pools connected by mere rivulets of running water. A few hundred yards above the camp, where cultivation ceased, its banks were fringed by narrow broken strips of trees and low jungle, and its bed filled with large boulders of rock, partly hidden by the bastard cypress and high tiger grass which there grew plentiful and thick. A few bushes and stunted trees were also scattered amongst the rocks. It was the excellent cover this afforded for tigers, which, in the hot season, delight in such cool retreats in the beds of rivers, that had induced the native Shikarees to select Mungaum as a favourable starting-point for the campaign.

Nor was the expected presence of tigers the only attraction which existed for the sportsman. The neighbouring hills were, as I have said, thickly

wooded with low jungle; but, in the numerous ravines, or, more correctly speaking, basin-like clefts which seamed the rocky front of the first range, there grew every here and there fine forest-trees. Dispersed among these somewhat plentifully was the mowar tree, on the sweet, fleshy, and flower-like fruit of which bears delight to feed. From it also is distilled a spirit, regarding which it may briefly be said that it is alike potent and detestable.

The masses of overturned rock and caves which girt in many places the precipitous sides of these jungle fastnesses, afforded secure and pleasant retreat to those animals. They afforded shelter from the noon-day sun, whilst their chosen food was close at hand for nightly depredation. Water, too, was in the vicinity; so that it formed altogether a small terrestrial ursine paradise. Tigers also would not unfrequently lie in these secluded spots. The cattle of the villagers, it is true, often fell victims to a tigrish appetite for beef; but samber, neilghye, and cheetul—all of which abounded in the hills—formed perhaps the larger portion of their bill of fare.

It will thus be seen that the district was well adapted for the successful prosecution of a campaign against the larger wild beasts, or, as it is usually called, "big game." The country being favourable,

it only remained for the sportsman to develop its resources. Conducted by keen and active Nimrods, with good weapons, a tolerably fair command of, and nerve to use, them rightly when meeting in conflict their more dangerous foes, moderate success could hardly fail to crown their efforts.

Having described the position and local surroundings of the camp, let me briefly endeavour to convey an idea of the little camp itself, before narrating the adventures of its occupants.

The half dozen mango trees of which the grove was composed stood almost in a line due east and west. Within their shade were pitched two small tents; one of the sort known as a "Bechoba" (literally without pole), and the other a "Hill Rowtie." Both are of a description the smallest and lightest, and the latter especially,—the most portable in use in India. Having but one thin covering, without any "outer fly" or second roof, they were not calculated to resist the full fervour of the mid-day sun; but, when pitched in the shade of trees, afforded all the shelter our sportsmen required during the day. During the night they usually slept outside, for the sake of the greater degree of freshness obtainable in the freer current of air away from the trees.

The bechoba, as its name implies, is without any

centre pole, and is square. Its roof, stiffened with slips of bamboo, is supported on four sticks of the same, and to it are fastened the walls. The rowtie is formed of a cloth suspended from a cross bar resting on two poles at the opposite ends. When stretched by the ropes attached, it covers a space of ground oblong in shape. Both kinds are quickly and easily pitched or struck.

In addition to these little habitations for the masters, there were pitched under some of the neighbouring trees a couple of rowties, of a somewhat different form, but similar construction to that described. These were for the use of the servants and for cooking purposes. Within, around, and about them lay in seeming confusion oddly-shaped old boxes, baskets, earthen pots for water, firewood, cooking utensils, and various other camp requisites. Fowls, too, wandered about at will or nestled in the shade, and a sheep was tied to a tent-peg close by. Servants moved to and fro, and a few villagers were squatted on their hams near at hand.

Under other trees were picketed horses and ponies, six in number, with piles of hay in front of each. It only required a glance at some of them to show that hunting, and that over rough ground, was a sport with which they were well acquainted.

Those recently arrived were being rubbed down by the syces. Grain-bags, horse-clothing, and other stable necessaries depended from the boughs of the neighbouring trees.

A common country tattoo, cow-hocked, ragged, and baré ribbed, with a fore pastern tied to the hind one on the same side, wandered uneasily and with great effort in search of such scraps of the parched roots of grass and digestible mould as he could manage to discover, and with difficulty stow away. This attenuated specimen of horse-flesh had the distinguished honour of bearing on the march the portly form of old Sheik Hussein, Mackenzie's head servant.

To the baggage camels, or rather their drivers, were allotted two or three trees about a couple of hundred yards away. The unpleasant odour peculiar to those most useful beasts of burden, renders distance desirable to the olfactory organs of those not perfectly acclimatised; and none but natives ever can become so. They were at present away feeding on the tender shoots and leaves of certain jungle trees and bushes. This was their daily occupation, going every morning and returning in the evening, when not required for other purposes. They were few in number—as could be seen by the pack-saddles left behind—for our sportsmen disdained

the use of large tents, and travelled with as little impedimenta as the nature of an Indian climate and of the country permitted.

The furniture within the tents consisted of a small folding camp table of two pieces, which were joined together for meals. This was common to all, while each had for his own use a chair, a light four-legged thing by courtesy called a bed, and a folding three-footed stand for the metal washing-basin. The latter stood outside, as being more convenient for ablutionary purposes than in the limited dimensions of the tent. A small folding looking-glass, too, with much of the silvering erased, was suspended in each tent, dangling to and fro with every flap of the tent wall. For the rest, boxes, guns, and clothing—the latter hung around in convenient disarray—completed the picture of the interior. Mackenzie inhabited the bechoba, which was also the public meal-room, and the other two chummed together in the rowtie.

A few hunting spears fastened against the tents, water choguls, and wetted cloth-covered bottles, depending from the ropes, and large chatty pots on the ground, were the only features peculiar to the exterior which are deserving of notice.

This, in India, would be considered light equipment; but it was sufficient for the hardy energetic

sportsmen, who derided the luxurious fashion in which it pleaseth some to follow sport. They had plenty of beer, however, brandy, and a very little wine for great occasions. A few potted meats, too, and other articles hermetically sealed in tins, were contained in the cooking boxes. They were kept as a stand-by, should neither game nor meat be at any time procurable.

I have reserved to the last the description of the most important portion of their equipment—the batteries. Mackenzie's consisted of a double gun and a heavy double rifle, the latter throwing a spherical bullet twelve to the pound. The bore of the gun was 14, and both had been made to order by an Edinburgh maker. He had also another double gun, borrowed from a friend for the occasion.

Norman possessed a short double rifle—what he called a "plobby," one—made by W. & C. Smith, a very useful implement for jungle work; also a long single rifle, throwing an ounce ball, very finely sighted, and with a hair trigger. It was best adapted for the nicety and correctness required in antelope shooting, but was still a useful tool for a long quiet shot, even in jungle. Lastly, he owned a double shot gun—No. 14 gauge—made by a country maker, and which had formed part of his

outfit when first his father started him from the shores of old England.

Hawkes' battery was composed of a Westley Richards' double gun and rifle, of bore 14 and 16 respectively. Like Mackenzie, he, too, had borrowed a gun from a friend in the garrison. I should observe that all the double rifles were made with sights to lower flush with the barrels, such being more convenient for close jungle shooting.

I have now, as I hope, given to the uninitiated reader some general idea of a sporting encampment on a small scale; sufficiently so, at least, to enable him with the help of his imagination to fill in the picture. But I beg him to remember, that I am not describing one of those magnificent battues with elephants, handsome suites of tents, and other expensive accessories; but the humble camp of a workman-like little party, with more sporting resolution and energy than money to spare. But such as it was, they deemed it ample for the purpose they had in view; nor would they willingly have encumbered themselves with mere luxuries. They were bent on sport, and esteemed that paramount to other considerations.

CHAPTER II.

How Tigers are marked down—A new method of catching Fish—A beat for a Tiger—Viewed—The first Shot—A swimming Shot—The last Shot—The Death—The Beaters—How to treat them—The Evening of the first Kill—Tiger Leg-Mutton—Other native Luxuries.

THE middle of the day—at least, not before nine or ten o'clock—is the time when, after his nightly wanderings, a tiger is considered to have definitively taken up his residence in some selected spot, till darkness again calls him forth on his errand of death. Before that hour he is restless, uncertain, and easily disturbed; and, in consequence, the trackers or markers (men placed on the look-out in the neighbourhood of favourite haunts to mark them down) do not feel any confidence that the beast may not move before they can inform the sportsmen of his whereabouts.

A hungry tiger will often seek his food at any time; but, as he is very susceptible of heat, unless urged by unusual past abstemiousness, chooses his lair before the sun has attained great height. After the heat of the day sets in, he may generally be

expected to remain in the cover he has entered, unless much disturbed.

When I speak of the trackers, I do not mean that they trace an animal right up to his place of repose, but merely to the confines of the patch of jungle or other cover; and then circle round. Should no fresh marks be discovered leaving it, they are of course aware the beast is couched within its recesses. In fact, to use a northern term, they "ring" him.

Our sportsmen had reached their camp at an hour sufficiently early to leave them plenty of time for breakfast before the expected "khubber" (intelligence or report) should arrive.

They were much refreshed by a bath; and the dusty, perspiring travellers, of some half an hour before, looked comfortable, clean, and fresh, as they sat down to breakfast in the loose, light habiliments so agreeable to the sojourner in tropical climates—the simple deshabille of shirt and "paijamas," or light, baggy, Turkish trousers.

Young Hawkes had wished to take a plunge in the tempting pool so close at hand; but his more experienced friends had dissuaded him from doing so, knowing how dangerous it was after the sun had got so high. But they promised themselves the daily pleasure of a swim after the day's work was over; and, if not too lazy, of one in the early

morning also. That quiet roll and lounge in the water, after a hard day's sport in the hot season, is surely to be numbered among the greatest of animal pleasures. But it requires to be enjoyed in a tropical climate to be thoroughly appreciated.

Breakfast was laid in Mackenzie's little tent. That gentleman, who was the senior of the three, and had attained to the rank of Captain, was also treasurer and general finance minister and manager of the expenses of the expedition. A certain sum had been lodged in his hands by each of the others, which, with his own contribution, formed a fund for the payment of beaters, rewards, messing, and other public expenses, in which all equally shared.

"Sahib," said Mackenzie's grey-headed, paunchy old butler, as, with a jerk, he whisked the cover off a dish placed before his master—"Sahib, the head man of the village sent a good fish for the gentlemen's eating. I have had some cooked for breakfast."

"And a very fine fish too, to judge by these slices," said Mackenzie. "What sort is it, Sheik Hassein?"

"It is the murrel, your honour; they say they are very large in the river," was the reply, in Hindustani.

"And how do they catch them? We might,

perhaps, manage to do something in that way, eh! Norman? You have some tackle, haven't you?"

"A reel, about twenty yards of sound line, and a few hooks, with some strands of gut, is about all that white ants, moths, and the other destructive and delightful vermin of this country have left me out of a well-stocked case," answered Norman. "My rod was smashed long ago."

"I dare say we can manage with a long bamboo," Hawkes remarked. "But how did you say they caught the fish, Sheik Hassein?"

"They are not caught, Sahib. Those poor creatures the Bheels shoot them with bows and arrows; ignorant jungle men that they are!"

"With bows and arrows! How can that be? If the arrow struck, the fish would swim away with it."

This the pompous old butler was unable to explain, and his dignity was much hurt, both at his master's incredulity, and at his being told the jungle people had been chaffing him. What did it signify? He had been told the fact as stated by him, and was contented to know that by means of bows and arrows the fish was captured. Enough. What other interest could it have for him? It was beneath the position and dignity of so solemn and orthodox a Mussulman to learn anything from those jungle

fellows, the wild Bheels. They had bows and arrows. They brought fish. What more?

But no such train of reasoning passed through the mind of the worthy old fellow's master, or those of his friends. They were not so easily satisfied. So, on further inquiry being instituted, it appeared that Norman's dressing boy, or valet—a young imp, who had imbibed some of his master's predilections for sport—had watched the capture of this very fish. He described that the Bheel fixed a string to the iron head of the arrow, which was made with large barbs. Sneaking to the bank, among the bushes overhanging a pool, one or two fish were observed to be basking, a portion of their backs being above water. The arrow was fixed, and projected with an accurate aim, and the string enabled the bowman to drag his prey, despite his struggles, forcibly from the water. This was, indeed, the manner of its capture, as the sportsmen had themselves opportunities afterwards of seeing.

A bowl of mangoe-fool—called *mangoful* by Sheik Hassein—made from the fruit growing on the trees above them, was another delicacy provided by the careful old butler. This disposed of, and the pleasant after-breakfast Manilla smoked, the hunters considered it time to prepare for business, and accordingly exchanged their light, cool costume for

one more adapted to jungle work. The suits of all, from puggree to shoes, were dyed a russet-brown, of a shade to match, as nearly as possible, the colour of dried jungle. There was not much difference in the cut of the coats, fashioned by native tailors; but while Mackenzie wore long gaiters, reaching well upon the thigh, Norman affected the same useful protection, but contented himself with shorter ones, buttoning up to just below the knee only; and Hawkes wore simple trousers. Each had buckled round his waist, within his coat, a broad yellow leather belt, made from the soft, pliable skin of the samber. To these were affixed little pouches, containing bullets and patches. A short hunting-knife also hung in its sheath, on the left side.

As the morning waxed old, the comparison and handling of the batteries, all prepared for action, afforded less satisfaction than had been the case when they were first brought from their cases and put together. Bullets had been counted, greased patches and caps stowed away, and all preparations made for an immediate start, directly the "khubber" should arrive. The spare gun-carriers, too, were at hand; but yet no messenger came from the shikarees. Young Hawkes had for some time past been in a state of fidgety excitement, and even his older companions were beginning to feel a little anxious,

as it dawned upon them that news was late in coming.

But just as they began to consider it really becoming a serious matter, a party of three or four men, striding rapidly along, made their appearance; not from the direction of the cover up the river as expected, but by a road which led across the open ground. Breaking into a trot as they approached, probably on seeing that they were observed by the Sahibs, the men were soon salaaming low before them.

In reply to the hunters' interrogatories, they stated that Rugonauth had marked down a tiger, "and has sent us to call your quick, Sahib people," they added.

"Is it in the Mungaum jungle?" asked Mackenzie.

"No, Sahib. There were no fresh pugs there this morning. Two or three days have gone since any tiger has couched there. This tiger is seated in the Loonee river, near a Bheel village, about five miles off. Rugonauth says we are to bring lots of fireworks."

The ponies were already being saddled, and the party was soon in motion, with men carrying their guns, leather choguls of water, and a packet of fireworks. Nor, though the riders moved at a jog-trot,

did the fleshless natives find any difficulty in keeping up with them.

It should be mentioned, that fireworks are most useful auxiliaries in forcing a tiger from thick patches of jungle, rocks, and other lairs, to approach which very closely would be dangerous for the beaters. If his whereabouts is tolerably accurately guessed, and a firework or two pitched near him, there are few possessed of equanimity sufficient to withstand the influence of the spitting, fizzing fire of a well-made *flower-pot* or *rocket*, or the lively jumps of a good cracker. But of the three, commend me to the flower-pot. This is an earthen case shaped somewhat like an elongated beehive, with a hole at the top through which, when lighted, a fine spluttering fire issues with force. The rockets are hollow tubes of bamboo, about eight or twelve inches long, but are not, I think, so certain as the flower-pots; the latter, moreover, appear to be the more manageable of the two in the hands of beaters.

The road, crossing here and there several patches of cultivated land, led for the most part through thickish jungle in nearly an opposite direction to the hills.

An hour's ride brought them to a little village, composed indeed of not more than ten or a dozen low huts. Hewers of wood, and cutters of grass,

some of the outcast tribes are not permitted to mingle with the superior castes, however poor, and are, therefore, forced to isolate their habitations, and live in communities of their own.

Well acquainted with the jungles into which their avocations lead them, and with the habits of its denizens, these men become well-trained shikarees. Their knowledge of the haunts of game, and skill in tracking, render them, therefore, useful assistants to the regular professional shikarees employed by officers, many of whom, indeed, have originally sprung from the same class.

Under some trees near the rude Pariah village, were collected about forty or fifty men. To these were now added the ten or a dozen who had accompanied the riders.

Directly the hunters pulled up in front of the group, and dismounting, gave their ponies in charge to the syces, the hum of voices ceased, and old Rugonauth, with a mien full of the dignity and importance befitting the occasion and his own exalted position as head shikaree, approached and made his salaam. This was marked by a self-conscious bearing of satisfaction, which was not lost on two of the experienced men whom he addressed. They had learnt, from the detection of frequent false reports, to distinguish generally be-

tween the demeanour of him who brought true and certain information, and the bearing of him whose khubber was suspicious or doubtful. They both felt that in this instance game had actually been seen and marked down, and that it was not a beat on speculation or chance they had been summoned to undertake.

It was with a grunt of assent and approval from several of the bystanders—most of whom were staring open-mouthed at the Englishmen, but rarely seen in those remote regions—that Rugonauth made his report, and detailed how a tiger was then lying in a thick patch of jow (Bastard cypress), which grew plentifully in the bed of the neighbouring river. Before he had concluded, several of the most prominent chimed in with excited exclamations; being probably those who had themselves seen, or assisted in tracking, the tiger.

But they were vigorously suppressed by Rugonauth, who did not approve of his duties being thus interfered with, or possibly, his share of credit diminished.

When, however, he had finished his statement, he called one or two of the local shikarees, and in conjunction with them discussed the plan of operations.

Before signifying their approval of the plan, the

sportsmen determined to judge for themselves of its feasibility, as this could easily be managed. On this announcement the beaters were ordered to betake themselves silently, and by circuitous paths, to the further extremity of the patch of jungle, while the hunters, their gun carriers, and Rugonauth, proceeded to inspect the position.

This was found to be in the bend of the river, which, here widening, may have been some hundred-and-fifty yards from bank to bank. But of this, only a very small portion was actually occupied by the channel of the stream. About twenty yards across, it swept under one bank, the bend of which it followed. The space between the water and the further bank was thickly grown with jow in patches of irregular density, with a few openings. Boulders of rock peeped here and there above the cover, and a few stunted dak trees and corinda bushes also broke the monotonous colour of the jow.

Cover of this description prevailed more or less in many portions of the river's bed, or what had probably once been such; but the strip in this part did not exceed three or four hundred yards in length.

Having satisfied themselves by personal inspection of the fitness of the shikarees' proposed plan of proceedings, the hunters intimated their intention

of acting on it, after a few telegraphic signals had passed between Rugonauth and two or three markers placed in the dak trees I have mentioned.

As the fairest plan, the positions were assigned by lot. Three blades of grass of different lengths quickly determined this.

To Hawkes it fell to occupy a tree which overlooked the jungle, about midway between the two ends. While commanding its breadth, it also guarded a nullah leading to the dense thicket not far from the river bank. Mackenzie and Norman were stationed about thirty yards apart, on the high bank above the water. Mackenzie was nearest to that end of the cover which was opposite to the one at which the beaters were assembled. He was distant from it about a hundred yards. Each, as in Hawkes' case, also held guard over a wooded nullah, which ran from the jungle behind, to the river.

All were thus stationed on one and the same side of the river, and between it and the thick jungle behind. The other side was open, and presented no inducement for the tiger to break in that direction, —indeed the village and its surrounding plot of cleared land lay there.

Having seen the sportsmen properly posted, Rugonauth went off to get the beaters into line at their

end, and entrust the fireworks to the charge of reliable men.

In a short time a prolonged yell broke on the previous stillness. This was accompanied by the beating of tom-toms—or, as they are called in those parts, tim-tims—and the banging of other discordant instruments. A dropping fire too was kept up from several old matchlocks, to the carriers of which, coarse-grained native powder had been distributed beforehand for blank firing. Altogether, it would be a very sound-sleeping tiger whose repose could continue with so much noise abroad; and the hunters, with straining senses, watched anxiously for some intimation of his presence. Peafowl and partridges every now and then came whirring past, as the beaters advanced; but yet there were no signs to show that the animal sought had been aroused from his mid-day rest. Still the line came nearer and nearer, and could be discerned moving in little knots of four or five; both for the sake of mutual protection, and also to take advantage of the open ways which intersected the tangled labyrinth of jungle. They beat up to the level of the position occupied by Hawkes, passed it, and reached a particularly thick patch, nearly opposite Norman's station. This, too, was beaten round without success; but whether old Rugonauth smelt tiger, or

some other sense, for which we have no name, conveyed to his practised intelligence—as frequently appears to be the case—an impression that the tiger was there. I cannot say; but he was evidently not satisfied, and ordered the patch to be beaten through more closely.

Violent gesticulations, and only partially suppressed howls of excitement from one of the look-outs in the trees, announced that Rugonauth's acuteness had not deceived him. Though the man elongated his skinny arm and finger to the utmost, and pointed to a certain part of the cover, the game remained invisible to the hunters; and it shortly appeared to have passed from the fellow's observation, as he ceased his movements, and contented himself with peering through the leaves of the tree in which he was posted. In about half a minute, however, Norman's quick eye lighted for a single second on a rufous coloured mass, stealthily sneaking along through the jungle; but almost as soon as seen, it disappeared. Another brief space, and again he caught a glimpse of it right in front of him, and distant about a hundred yards. It stopped for a moment to listen, but its meditations were quickly brought to an end by the crack of Norman's rifle. It was a rapid snap shot, but the bullet if ineffectual must have whizzed pretty close, for, with

a loud roar, a fine tiger started into full view, and went bounding down the jungle, clearing large patches of bushes at every spring.

"Missed, I believe!" shouted Norman, as he began to reload. "Keep a good look-out at the end of the jungle, Mac."

Mac did so, for the animal was only in sight for a few tremendous leaps, and he did not think it worth while to fire. But nothing broke from the end.

At the first roar, some of the beaters had scrambled into low trees, but most of them huddled together like a flock of frightened sheep; and in this form they were now led by old Rugonauth out of the jungle on the side opposite to the sportsmen, with the object of beating from the remote end and driving the tiger from the thick patch in which he had disappeared.

Advancing in a compact body, and not scattered as heretofore in parties or singly, they approached the place, throwing stones and an occasional rocket or flower-pot as skirmishers in front.

This was evidently not to the tiger's taste, for he slipped down a few feet of bank into the river, and partly in water, partly on the shingly shore, galloped back down the river side in a direction almost straight towards Mackenzie. Having a good

command from his position on the bank, Mac let him come on; and, when within some thirty or forty yards, let drive. The bullet told, evidently behind, for the beast, pulling up in his headlong career, performed a regular waltz, partly rose on his hind legs, springing round several times as if to get at the wound, roaring with full tiger power during this gymnastic performance. But Mac's left barrel warned him of the propinquity of danger: so he abruptly re-ascended the bank and turned into the jungle, receiving right and left from Norman before he became concealed in the friendly cover.

The beaters were again withdrawn to the outside of the jungle, opposite to the place in which he was now supposed to be lying. A lucky and well-directed flower-pot stirred him up however, and again he sneaked to the end; but this time quietly glided down the bank into the deep water, and commenced swimming directly across.

Once on the other side, the same as that on which the hunters were stationed, the dense jungle in their rear, which extended for miles, afforded a secure retreat. That attained, there would be small chance of recovering him, wounded though he was. The effort was a bold one, but it was not fated to be successful.

The distance was over a hundred yards, but

THE FIRST TIGER—A SWIMMING SHOT [P. 33.

Mac's deadly heavy rifle was quickly brought up, and, after a momentary steadying, growled forth its anathema. Swimming as the beast was, with only the head, line of back and the tail visible, it was a good shot to strike it. But the aim was true. Rearing half out of the water, he pawed at the air, receiving from Norman also a well-planted bullet. Turning round, he gave up his intention of forcing the passage of the river, and again retreated to the dense cover of the bushes at the end of the jungle.

"Well done, Mac, old fellow, well shot!" Norman had shouted as the first bullet told; "just stopped him in time."

"Same to you," was the reply, as Norman followed suit, "that's another for his nob."

"He got it severely there," said Norman, as he joined his friend when the tiger disappeared. "I don't like allowing the men to go in again."

"I don't think there will be any danger, if they'll only stick together and shout from the end of the patch, and be liberal with the crackers and flower-pots. But let us hear what Rugonauth says. I see Hawkes has gone round to the other side too."

It was soon ascertained that the tiger was lying about a dozen yards from a small tree, in which one of the markers was standing, whitey-brown with funk; for although he had crept as high as the

branches would bear him, he was not more than twelve feet from the ground.

"We can't get the marker to speak, Sahib," shouted Rugonauth, "but he is pointing towards the tiger; and on this side we can see the bushes moving where he is tearing them in pain." And in effect, the two friends also saw from their place, the tops of some of the larger jow bushes swaying to and fro.

After a brief colloquy, it was determined that all three of the hunters should join on the other side; and, should the beast not prove amenable to all their persuasive efforts to rouse him, advance directly on the place of his retreat. But before performing this dangerous manœuvre, they decided to exhaust all possible means of inducing him to show.

It occurred to Norman, that if the marker could be induced to get the brute to charge up to his tree, they might roll him over as he crossed an intervening open space. At any rate, the man was safe, covered as he was by the three sportsmen then standing not more than twenty yards from him.

The man was appealed to in affecting terms by Rugonauth; but, shivering with fright, he steadily declined to hold any verbal communication whatsoever.

"He is ready to drop out of the tree with funk, Sahib," said the old shikaree; "there is no getting anything out of him, but I'll try and get him to break off a bit of branch and throw it towards the tiger, while you be prepared in case he gets up."

Sending the beaters to a distance, and standing shoulder to shoulder, the hunters advanced to the nearest spot attainable, at the same time covering the opening I have spoken of, and Rugonauth commenced exhorting the marker in the most moving and feeling manner. "Why look here!" he said, "do you think you can be in any danger with these three tiger-slaying lords to defend you? What animal dare show itself before them without being made to eat their invincible bullets? Arree! wah! You are like a miserable crow in a tree. Bind courage, you poor wretch, and then you will receive much honour and *baksheesh* for being the means of causing that infidel tiger to die."

Several of his fellow-villagers also chimed in from a distance, entreating him to do as desired.

Whether it was owing to the moving eloquence of Rugonauth, the exhortations of his brethren, or the magic name of '*Baksheesh*,' the wretched man did at last, hesitatingly, snap off a large twig and throw it at the tiger.

The brute immediately started up and made

towards the tree; but ere he had covered half the intervening space, three rifle bullets crashed into his body, and he rolled over into a dip in the ground where the bushes concealed him.

"Is he dead?" was shouted to the marker; and that individual plucking up spirit as he saw the dreaded beast lying prostrate before him, managed to find a husky voice and answered, that "he thought it was, though still gasping."

"I'll go and see, and make sure," Mackenzie said, "while you be ready here to cover me in case of need." Accordingly he went to the tree, climbed into it, fired a shot to make certain, and then proclaimed the tiger to be dead.

It proved to be a splendid tigress; and loud was the chattering among the beaters as they gathered round, and the boasts of what each had done towards bringing the affair to a successful conclusion.

One had stirred him up with a flower-pot, and took great credit to himself for performing that feat of valour from a safe position in the midst of his fellows. Another had seen him first; and expended a deal of breath in describing, again and again, to nobody in particular, how the beast moved, and how he saw it; and how it moved again, and he didn't see it. A third had been nearest when it took to the river, and with violent gesticulations,

attempted to enlist the wonder of a few of the group in describing the animal's movements, especially when he reared out of the water. A fourth had been most advanced when he first broke.

But it would be endless to enumerate what each had done. Indeed, speaking, as they mostly did, all at once, whether with listeners or not, it would have required an ear of no common power to separate one vaunt from another. The only one among them, who really seemed to have an audience, was the hero of the tree, as he narrated, with great volubility, and many repetitions, a very exaggerated history of his danger and his escape.

The professional shikarees, however, the men on whom the real business devolved, and who were capable of most plucky deeds, took the matter much more quietly. They discussed it in its various bearings, and especially extolled the fine shooting displayed when the tigress was stopped in the passage of the river. Pointing to the different bullet-holes, too, they tried to account for each; where and at what period of the fray it was made, and by whom.

The better to consider these momentous questions, while the Sahibs rested under a tree and produced their brandy-flasks and a cool chogul of water, the shika-

rees retired to a few yards' distance, and in turn inhaled the fumes of coarse native tobacco, drawn through a hollow bone. Each clasped his hands firmly round one end, thus forming a smoke-tight medium through which to inhale. He then applied his lips to a small aperture left between the thumbs, and in this way had his smoke without polluting the bone with his mouth. A very few whiffs revive them wonderfully. It is only in the absence of their better pipes, that so primitive a method of smoking is resorted to.

The hunters were much pleased at this auspicious commencement of the sporting campaign. Rugonauth, too, gravely and sedately rejoiced over the death of the first tiger he had shown; and predicted great subsequent sport, and consequent emolument to himself. Nor did he object to a glass of brandy, which his masters offered him, to drink to their continued success.

It must not be supposed that the encounter from first to last occupied but a brief half-hour. From the time the beaters were first put in, to the death, it may have lasted two or three hours.

Neither must it be supposed that any very unusual number of bullets were expended before the final one was fired. It is not often that a close shot is obtained under such favourable circumstances as

to make it reasonably sure of killing. There are several reasons for this. There is the excitement. The beast, too, is usually moving in thick jungle, or, if in the open, at a gallop. Snap-shots—and those very frequently, when only a portion of the body is visible—are rather the rule than the exception. All these circumstances conduce to missing; and almost fabulous would be considered by the inexperienced the amount of ammunition sometimes expended, and but few wounds to show how much had been expended in vain. Besides, a large powerful animal like a tiger or bear requires not only to be struck vitally, but in a part exercising an immediate influence over the motive power. Though mortally wounded, a beast will often strive and fight, perhaps for hours; and not unfrequently escape altogether, to die in some secluded spot, a feast for jackals, but yielding no trophies to his victors.

At the long and difficult shots which had distinguished the affray, our hunters may be considered as fortunate in having been so successful in their shooting.

After giving the necessary directions, the three sent for their ponies and cantered off to the tents.

It was nearly sunset, however, before the beaters, who, in relays, staggered under the weight of the

tigress, which had been tied by its legs to a long branch, reached the camp. Having deposited their burden with much grunting and rubbing of shoulders, they were, under the orders of Mackenzie, marshalled into line, and then desired to sit down in a ring. This accomplished, Mackenzie, with a bag of money in his hand, briefly addressed them:

"You have all done well," he said. "The other Sahibs and myself are pleased. You shall always be fairly paid by myself, or one of the other gentlemen, and have your day's pay without deduction. Place that in mind. To-day I shall give you an extra half-day's pay; and so I will always do when we kill. After I have paid you, each man make for himself a cup, and I will give him a drink of Mourah."

There were some pleasant murmurings after this brief speech; but as it was probably unintelligible to many, though spoken in Hindustani, Rugonauth was desired to translate it into their dialect. A buzz of approval, and various ejaculations, in which "cherisher of the poor" was clearly and generally distinguishable, followed the announcement of the Sahib's intentions.

The money paid, the party dispersed in search of cups. These were soon found. The Peepul, or other broad-leaved tree, furnished the material.

The leaf, neatly twisted, was pinned together with baubel, or other thorns, seldom wanting in India. When thus prepared by hands well used to the operation, an efficient cup was in the possession of each man, and a wine-glassful, or thereabouts, of the potent spirit was poured by one of the servants into each. Nor was much time allowed for leakage it being, in most cases, turned immediately down the throat of the recipient.

This concluded, the poor simple creatures went on their way rejoicing, declaring that "they were always ready with their families—man, woman, and child—to beat the jungles for such kind and just lords. Never had better Sahib people come to those parts."

I hope it will not be taken amiss by those young Indian sportsmen, who do me the honour of reading this little book, if I venture to suggest to them, that in any future trip, they should act as we have seen Mackenzie do, and pay the beaters themselves. To allow the shikarees, or servants, to do so without being personally superintended by one of the hunters themselves, is tantamount to fleecing them of a per-centage of their hardly-earned wages. If this duty is entrusted to some native go-between, he is almost certain to pay himself at the expense of the wretched creatures who have done a fair day's

work for the pittance their due. And the gentlemen get the credit of this. Should they be disposed to clamour, the villagers are told it is the Sahib's order, and threatened with his dire displeasure if they profess to be discontented. Not only is the Englishman's name thus brought into disrepute, and associated with what is niggardly and unjust, but the consequence not unfrequently is, that when again required, beaters are not to be procured. Independently of the justice of the case, it therefore becomes sound policy to satisfy oneself that all have their rights. It is very tantalising to find sometimes that no beaters are forthcoming when game is marked down. And not only does it affect the careless paymasters themselves, but also any other party who may at some future time visit the place. It is surely but right and honourable to see that no deductions, on any account, are made from the usual pay. Those who permit it, either by inattention or carelessness, deserve to lose their game from want of that assistance which would otherwise be willingly afforded.

The three hunters, whose exploits I have undertaken to describe, were men kindly and humane. They were too good sportsmen not to be reasonably considerate towards those on whom much of their success depended. And the men very quickly found

this out, and in consequence yielded a ready and willing obedience. A kindly word or joke, any little notice indeed, when combined with the necessary determination to enforce attention to their orders, goes a great deal further than an oath, or anathema, against those "infernal niggers." And such I recommend to those young sportsmen whose lot it may be to follow in the footsteps of the "Eastern hunters."

As the sun went down the three friends strolled down to the pool, and found they had not deceived themselves as to the delight afforded by a plunge after the hard day's work. A swim and roll about in the water invigorated them immensely, and they shortly sat down to dinner in a state of mind and body it is rarely given to the dyspeptic shunner of air and exercise, or the contemner of energetic inuring sport to enjoy.

Before and during dinner the noise of many voices indicated where the process of skinning the dead tigress was being effected by the choomars (tanners), who had been summoned from a large village about three miles off. A spot had been selected for this purpose a little to the leeward of the camp, and to this, after dinner—much refreshed by copious libations of that most grateful compound "mug,"—the hunters betook themselves personally to super-

intend the stretching and pegging down of the skin.

When the hide is taken off, and the pieces of flesh and fat still adhering carefully scraped away, it is pegged to the ground by means of a number of little wooden pegs, two or three inches long, driven through the skin at intervals, just within its outer edge, all round. This is done with the hairy side of the skin downwards, so that, after being well washed and scraped, the interior may dry from the exposure, and thus the hide retain, without shrinking, the dimensions it has been stretched to. It therefore follows that a skin is somewhat longer in measurement than the animal who at one time actually wore it.

Cheroot in mouth, and lolling in their chairs in the loose undress I have before described, the hunters sat and superintended, smoking and chatting over the incidents of the day, in the pleasant light of a young tropical moon. The hum of many insects was around, seeming to pervade the air. Bats fluttered to and fro, and fireflies glittered in the shady nooks about the pool. A hungry impatient family or two of jackals set up their clamorous demands for supper, having already scented death on the still air. And more than once the ghost-like form of one more daring than the rest would

approach, only, however, to glide away, followed by a stone or stick from one of the village watchmen, or other detector of the intruder. An owl, flitting about, hooted its low wailing notes, like some ubiquitous demon; and all listened as, once or twice, the distant roar, or rather grunt, of a tiger came borne on the gentle night air. The hot sirocco wind which had blown strongly during the day had given place to one, not cool certainly, but now in comparison fresh, gentle, and balmy, though even yet puffs came laden with the furnace heat of the parched and desiccated soil. Occasionally a thump would be heard, causing a general rush and scramble among some of the followers, as a ripe mango fell to earth.

"How awfully jolly this is," observed young Hawkes, as he mixed a little cold weak "brandy pawnee" which his servant brought him. "It's astonishing to me how fellows stick in cantonments, when they can get out to the jungles and have a nice evening after such a glorious day's sport."

"And anticipations of other days as good," said Norman. "The mug, too, is better, the cheroots burn better, the air is better and fresher, and a man himself feels better in the jungles. 'Oh, a life in the woods for me!' Yes, it's very jolly, Hawkes. I am precious glad to see you taking so kindly to it.

Old Mac, here, and I have had many an enjoyable trip like this, and I hope we shall have many more. Eh, old fellow?"

"I believe you, me boy," answered the Scotchman in popular phrase. "The after-dinner cheroot of a successful day is about as jolly a thing as I know of, with good fellows to chat to and talk it over with."

"And what a lovely night it is," Norman remarked. "I declare, after the heat and excitement of the day, it makes a man feel at peace with himself and with the world, to sit out and hear the wind sighing through the trees. Were you ever in love, Hawkes?" he asked, as he turned abruptly to that individual. "This is a nice night for spooning, isn't it? I believe I can see you blushing in the moonlight. Were you thinking of Miss Verney just now, when you looked at the moon?"

Hawkes laughed as he answered with some slight confusion, "Come, Norman, no chaff. I think it was you who were inclined to be sentimental."

"Oh, hang the sentiment," said Mackenzie. "As leader of the expedition, I positively forbid it."

"Hark to the unromantic Highlander! But I say, Mac, we had better order the tiger's body to be taken away: I see they have cut off the head."

Mackenzie accordingly gave orders to that effect.

"Very well, Sahib," said the man to whom they had been given; "but some of the horse-keepers have a petition to make."

"What, about the tiger?" Mackenzie inquired.

"Yes, Sahib. They are low-caste fellows, and say they would like some of the meat."

"What? Do you mean to eat? Call them here. I should like to know what flavour it has."

"Rather rankish sort of food to indulge in, I should think," Norman observed.

"Regular cannibalism, or worse," said Hawkes. "What stomachs they must have."

On being summoned, two or three of the horse-keepers made their appearance, and in reply to the questions of their masters, declared they wished to be allowed to have a cut from the skinless body.

"But what does it taste like?" inquired Norman. "It must be very hard and strong in taste."

"Sahib, the meat is very hot meat. It is highly tasted and strength-giving. It is not good to eat too much of it."

"I can fancy it must indeed be stimulating flesh, and decidedly high-flavoured. Which is the best part? What piece do you wish to have?"

"If it be the Sahib's order, I should like to have that part they call the 'leg mutton,'" said the man,

using the English specific term, in a general sense comprehending the hind-quarters of all animals.

"The leg mutton! Tiger leg mutton!" laughed Norman. "Why, Mac, this is something new. We have often heard in the hunting-field of the pork 'muttony chops' served up for breakfast; but hang it,—defaming that homely joint is a delightful novelty."

After a hearty laugh at the queer confusion of terms, the men were allowed to depart, with permission to select the choicest bits from the body.

"Upon my word," said Mackenzie, "some of these low-caste natives will eat anything. Flesh is flesh to them; though tiger is better, I think, than cattle that have died of disease."

"What, will they eat that?" Hawkes asked.

"The outcasts will, and glad to get it, though it has been known to breed fearful disorders."

"Yes," said Norman. "We are very apt to be horrified at these disgusting tastes; but after all, the 'braxy mutton' of you Highlanders, Mac, is not much better."

"Good sound tiger is no end preferable, I should think," replied Mackenzie.

"Ay, and I bet," said Hawkes, "these fellows would sooner have their slice of tiger than the half-putrid flesh which it is sometimes fashionable for

epicures to indulge in, under the shape of what once was sound venison meat."

"True, and I agree with them," Norman said. "Theirs is mere natural craving for animal food; the epicure's a vitiated gastronomic taste; at least in those instances where the meat is eaten when nearly ready to walk away."

"I am told crocodile is fine tender food," Mackenzie observed; "and I know these big lizards, ichneumons, or whatever they call themselves, are capital grub in the native estimation. But these are subjects which require a little ballast, so I shall have a night-cap and turn in."

By the early hour of half-past nine the three sportsmen sought their cots, drawn outside the tents for the sake of the greater freshness. "Turning in" was slightly a misnomer, and hardly suggestive of Indian hot-weather repose; for it could only figuratively be applied to the prostration of the figure on the cot, unincumbered with sheets or blankets.

It is to be hoped that the digestions of the biped partakers of the tiger's flesh were not more incommoded than the troop of jackals, which, noisily banqueting on the same food, gave audible intimation of their vicinity, but without disturbing the wearied hunters.

CHAPTER III.

No "khubber"—Waiting for a Shot—Patience rewarded—Death of a buck Cheetul—Samber stalking—An affair with the Bears—Narrow escape—Distribution of the Meat—Greediness.

BEFORE sunrise on the following morning, the hunters took their dip in the pool. Nor were they deterred from doing so regularly by the appearance of a water-snake, which wriggled away in a shallow part from between Hawkes' legs, sending that gentleman flying out of the water.

Neither did a report that muggurs (alligators) inhabited the river have the effect of limiting their swim. The natives bathed there with impunity, and they saw no reason why they should not do so likewise.

The shikarees made their appearance soon after breakfast, saying that they had only attempted to ring the Mungaum jungle, as the men were too tired to try those more distant; and it was found to contain no tiger.

And truly old Rugonauth looked as if something had knocked him up. Norman, who knew the old

sinner well, judged that it was not altogether attributable to the fatigues of the previous day ; but, in part at least, to the copious libations which had, in all probability, signalised the fall of the first tiger.

Under these circumstances, it was determined to try for samber and cheetul in the afternoon, in the range of hills which rose from the plain on the opposite side of the river. As a regular beat was not contemplated, orders were issued for a couple of experienced men only, belonging to the locality, to be in attendance on each hunter at the hour of four. Under the guidance of the village shikarees,—well acquainted with the neighbouring country,—the sportsmen hoped by stalking to secure a skin or two, and some meat, both for themselves and the people.

Very tedious sometimes on shikar excursions are the mid-day hours when unemployed in the chace ; and weary seems the time till the approach of evening enables the sportsman to stroll out with his rifle or shot-gun,—as taste dictates,—in search of game, for which it is hardly worth while to brave the full fervour of the summer sun.

The early morning and evening, too, is the time, when the forest deer leave the thick and tangled coverts in which they have sought rest and shelter, and feed in the open pastures and glades in and

around ; thus affording to the hunter opportunities of stalking them.

Our party had with them a small selection of books,—some, anything but light reading. Many a man can trace to the long unemployed hours of the day, the knowledge of authors who, in all probability, would otherwise have remained unread. An Indian up-country station was not always, in former days, particularly well supplied with books, or at any rate, offered no extensive choice ; so that what might be deemed heavy literature, not unfrequently formed a portion of the hunter's equipment. As space was limited also, the burden of a large number of books was not to be thought of ; something which would last was usually sought in preference to novels, only to be galloped through and thrown aside.

A little before the hour I have named, the three friends had flung down whatever had occupied them, and stood prepared for the evening's sport.

To reach the hunting ground, they had to cross the river, and traverse the belt of jungle which intervened between it and the hills.

Separating at the camp itself, each took a direction, so as to strike the hills at spots about a mile apart, with the view of interfering as little as might be, one with the other.

I shall follow Norman, to whom it fell to take the central beat, which of course was that the nearest to and opposite the encampment.

A walk of a mile or so brought him to the foot of the first range of hills, and his conductor assured him that samber would certainly be on the feed somewhere among the dry yellow grass, which in patches studded the table-land on the top.

Girding their loins for the ascent, Norman and his two attendants accordingly made their way by a meandering track, originally worn from the thicket by wild animals themselves, and developed by the wood or grass-cutters of the village, in the pursuit of their avocations, into a rough path.

As they approached the top, they cautiously advanced, sheltered by the jungle, hoping to find some deer on the feed in the open pastures above. But none were to be seen. The village shikaree, however, who seemed well up to his work, pointed to some freshly-broken twigs and indented grass; and further on, a few hoof-prints showed that a herd of samber had passed; and, as the man asserted, but very recently.

"They cannot be very far off, Sahib," he said in a whisper. "There is a favourite feeding-ground a little to our right-hand; if it please the Sahib, I will go and see if there are any there."

"Very good, do so," replied Norman. "I will keep watch here till you return; and take you care of the wind." Saying this, he tossed a few blades of grass into the air, and pointed to the quarter whence they were blown.

The shikaree nodded his head and moved stealthily and silently away, making a slight detour, so as to gain a position from which he might approach up wind, the spot he wished to examine. Taking off as he went, the dirty ragged little roll of cloth which did duty for a pugree, and which might possibly, in some far-off period, have claimed to be white, he twisted twigs and leaves within its folds, and bending them so as to conceal both it and a portion of his face, replaced it.

Norman was not sorry to have a few minutes to regain the wind and steadiness which the climb up the hill had somewhat impaired. Sitting, rifle in hand, with his attendant perfectly still in the shade of a small tree, he awaited the man's return, or such chance as Diana might previously send one of her keenest votaries.

A brace of green pigeons came and settled in a neighbouring tree, and Norman watched them, thinking they would be very palatable for dinner. In the absence of other employment, he brought up his rifle and endeavoured to cover one after the

other successively. "A pretty rifle shot," he thought, as he aimed, without, of course, the intention of firing. He was thus employed, when the stillness was disturbed by a crackling sound, such as an animal might make in stepping on a dried twig or patch of shrivelled leaves. He instantly brought down his rifle and listened. Apparently the noise came from amidst the jungle on the slope of the hill, some two hundred yards below, and to one side of the place he occupied. The native caught the sound at the same time, and pointed in the direction whence it proceeded. Norman nodded his head, and motioned to the man to lie down behind an adjacent bush. This was quickly done; and he himself, with rifle at the ready, concealed his person behind the stem of the tree, listening intently to catch any further sound as an indication of the animal's progress, and in what direction.

Ere long, another crackle showed that whatever animal it might be, it was advancing in a line which, if continued in, would bring it within eighty or a hundred yards of his place of ambush.

The narrow track by which they had ascended the hill, seemed to afford, at about that distance, the opening he sought as offering a chance of a shot. With cocked rifle, the hunter kept his eye more particularly on this break in the density of the cover,

but at the same time cast, ever and anon, a glance over the intervening jungle. Again the sounds were heard; and Norman thought he caught a glimpse of a shadowy form pa sing amongst the brushwood.

The stillness now remained for some time unbroken, save by the whispering of the leaves as they rustled in the hot and dry wind, or the occasional note of some forest bird awakened into life as the cooler hours advanced. All at once a prolonged noise among the fallen leaves, seemingly not more than twenty or thirty yards distant, distracted the hunter's attention from the path; and even the native raised his head, and looked earnestly through the bush which sheltered him. But Norman soon satisfied himself that it proceeded from the scratching of jungle or spur-fowl, and not from the tread of a heavy animal. He turned once more to watch the open glade, and there standing broadside on, at about eighty yards' distance, was a doe cheetul. It seemed as if the creature must have risen out of the ground, so sudden was the apparition, and so brief the space of time during which his attention had wandered. Carefully he brought up his rifle, but paused with his finger on the trigger, as he became aware of a movement in the cover just behind the doe, and the horns of a buck appeared above a bush. The doe, quite unconscious of its narrow escape,

after looking suspiciously up and down the path, crossed it with deliberation and disappeared in the jungle on the other side, and its place was almost immediately taken by the owner of the horns. One moment was sufficient to draw the bead upon his shoulder; in another the "thud" of the rifle bullet announced the trueness of the aim, and the gallant buck cheetul, with a bullet through his heart, was lying dead in his tracks.

As the sharp rifle-crack echoed through the wood, two or three does bounded across the path like mere flashes, and were quickly lost in the dense cover on the other side.

As Norman and his attendant stood examining the beautiful creature, and admiring its fine proportions, the other villager added himself to the group with a movement so stealthy as scarcely to attract attention.

"Very good, Sahib!" was his first exclamation. "That bullet was well sent. I hope the sound of the gun has not disturbed the samber."

"Then you have seen some?" was Norman's quick demand, as he reloaded his empty rifle. "Where are they?"

"There are seven feeding on the grass land I mentioned, Sahib. Your slave has seen them, but they may have heard the noise and made off."

"That remains to be proved. I'll send this man to fetch some villagers to carry in the cheetul; and here, tie a piece of rag to this branch and drag the body underneath it. It will scare away anything till he returns. Now lead the way."

The two accordingly went off at a fast walk, and another ten minutes brought them to a dip in the table-land. A watercourse intersected the hollow, and although not at this season a running stream, had, from its monsoon abundance, left in its deepest clefts one or two pools of water, the resort during the night of numerous deer.

From ridge to ridge the intervening hollow was covered with yellow grass, tinged with green in those parts near the water. Patches of jungle fringed the ridges and also the whole undulating space, affording good stalking ground to an active man.

Peering through one of these patches, the villager pointed with exultation to the samber, still unconsciously feeding on the further side of the watercourse, but far out of shot from the spot from which the hunters were observing them. Norman nodded, and carefully examined the ground towards them, both with his own unassisted eyes and by the aid of a good binocular.

The deer were about a hundred yards from that

part of the watercourse which nearest approached them. Could the nullah be attained, it appeared sufficiently stony and rugged to afford cover to the stalker, who might then, with some difficulty, be able to make his way up it till he reached a point within fair shot.

Norman thought it quite practicable, as the wind was from the deer; so, telling his companion to sit where he was for the present, he waited till the samber had become hidden by one patch, and then stealthily and swiftly glided towards it. That reached, he had again to wait till the herd passed on and were lost behind another. In this way, making rushes from clump to clump, he managed to gain the nullah, but at a point still too far to risk a shot. The game had been slowly feeding parallel with the water-course, and away from the spot he had reached. He easily made his way for the next fifty yards, but after that the nullah turned partly towards the deer, and it was only by crouching very low, and availing himself of every boulder of rock or bush, or rise in the bank, that he managed at last to get within about a hundred yards of the nearest of the herd—a hind. The big stag was some twenty yards further away.

As he watched them through an aperture between two boulders of rock in the middle of the water-

course, the animal fed directly up the slope, and hence only presented his hind quarters. To fire at him in such a position would be useless; for if struck the wound could hardly stop the beast, who would quickly be lost in the neighbouring jungle. He waited a brief half-minute, but finding that the stag still persistently fed directly away, and was at every step increasing the distance between them, Norman seized a pebble and grated it harshly against the granite boulder.

The nearest hind turned rapidly round to look at the place from which the unaccustomed noise had issued. The stag himself ceased feeding; but less curious than his female relative, or deeming it perhaps her duty to detect danger, he only raised his head and lazily turned it to observe her motions. The movement, however, brought his body partially round, and presented a slanting shot to the ready-prepared hunter.

Pointing his rifle through the crevice, he put on the hair-trigger and fired, and was glad to hear the answering "thud" of the bullet striking flesh. The stag reeled and fell to his knees, but recovered himself and broke into a lumbering canter.

Norman had left his double rifle with the shikaree, preferring to use his fine-sighted hair trigger for the stalking shot, and now he half regretted it.

The whole of the hinds, with two half-grown young ones, went away at a gallop ; but, after proceeding a short distance, decreased their pace as they found their lord and master lingering far in the rear. More than one turned to look at him, wondering no doubt at his unusual laziness in the presence of danger. However, they disappeared over the ridge, but before he reached that point of safety, his uneasy trot had subsided to a walk. Once the beast stopped, but it was only for a moment ; and he followed in the wake of the hinds and also passed over the ridge in the same track.

Norman had, meanwhile, kept perfectly still, earnestly watching every movement through his glass. No sooner had the stag vanished than he started up, reloaded as quickly as possible, and turned round to signal his assistant. That worthy, however, was already making the best of his way down the slope to join him.

"Sahib," said he, as he came up ; "the samber will not go very far. He was hard hit."

"I know it," was the answer, as Norman exchanged his single for the double rifle. "We must get on his track, though. He will be lying down, I expect. What sort of country is it over the ridge ?"

"Much like this, Sahib. There is jungle a little beyond. He will perhaps lie down in that."

"Then we shall have a good view from that rock, shall we not?" asked Norman, pointing to an elevated portion of the ridge.

The man replied in the affirmative. So to the rock in question they at once made their way. This reached, they cautiously and carefully peered over, but after a lengthened examination, could discover no samber.

"He will have entered that patch," said Norman, who was still scanning the ground about. "You see those trees," he continued after a while. "Good! I will get to their shelter; and when you see me safely there, go round, concealed by the ridge, and cross it about that green bush; then walk down into the open. The wind is from there. The beast may scent you and break within shot of me. If he won't move, we must track him."

The man replied with a "very good, Sahib," and after seeing Norman reach the trees indicated, proceeded to perform his portion of the manœuvre, and carry into effect the orders he had received.

This was judiciously done, but without its producing the result desired. So, seeing that the animal, if there, was not inclined to break, Norman beckoned to the man, and they sought the pug or slot. There was no blood on it, but the experienced hunter rather argued favourably than the reverse

from that circumstance. Internal bleeding, he knew, was usually indicative of a more dangerous wound than one with copious external effusion, and he was perfectly satisfied the beast had been hard hit.

The track took them right up to the thicket, as anticipated; Norman with cocked rifle leading the way. As they approached it, the samber, who was lying down, just within its skirts, jumped up, but only to fall to the bullet which greeted his appearance.

It proved to be a large stag, but not carrying so fine a head as it would have done some months later. The horns are not nearly so handsome as those of the red deer, being only three tyned; but still, when in maturity, are fine sylvan trophies.

The first bullet, it was found, had passed between the ribs and lodged in the chest, whence it was afterwards extracted.

In anticipation of a good supper of meat that evening, the villager was enthusiastic in his admiration, both of the beast and of the shot which had laid him low. But, while bestowing his encomiums on Norman's abilities, he was not forgetful of his own surpassing merits as a shikaree, or his intimate acquaintance with the haunts of the forest game.

"The Sahib's hand is heavy on the game," he said. "His gun deals death. And his slave, Manajee, is a great shikaree—the greatest in these parts. I will show your worship any quantity of game, for I—sit—sit—down, Sahib," he suddenly ejaculated in the midst of his vaunts; "here are some samber coming!"

And true enough, three or four came cantering leisurely past, within sixty or seventy yards, without having as yet perceived the two men. As Norman, however, raised his weapon, the flashing of the barrels or some other circumstance attracted their attention, and their easy pace was quickly changed into one of the most headlong speed. They rushed past at full stretch, Norman singling out a young stag, at which he let drive with his left barrel. But the beast continued its flight uninterruptedly, the bullet striking slightly behind it, and careering through the air after ricocheting, with a shrill "pinging" noise.

As evening was drawing on, Norman decided on returning towards the camp by a slight *détour*. They reached the foot of the hills without seeing anything more, and made for the path by which they had come, so as to meet the men who had been sent for from the village. This they shortly did, and leaving the shikaree to conduct them to the

spot where the samber was concealed, and disembowel the game, Norman transferred his rifles to another; but before he left them, he heard Manajee declare, in reply to one of his fellow villagers, that the Sahib was a mighty hunter; and that he—Manajee to wit—"was the best shikaree in those parts, an unerring puggee, and a tree-to-tree guide through the country." He reached the camp a little before dark, about the same time as Hawkes. The latter had been also successful, having killed a samber hind, missed another, and also a Neilgye.

It was quite dark before Mackenzie came in; and late though he had tarried, he returned empty-handed.

"What sport, Mac?" was the inquiry which saluted him as he arrived.

A hoarse sound, between a growl and a chuckle, was the only answer vouchsafed until he had taken a long pull at some brandy-and-water, with which his experienced servant met him on his dismounting from his horse. Thus invigorated, he spoke. "Confounded luck! Blown myself till I couldn't speak; half sprained my ancle; turned myself into a regular wet sponge; and all for nothing." Unsatisfactory as this might reasonably be deemed to Mackenzie, it appeared to be fraught with some-

thing exceedingly ludicrous, for he burst out laughing. He shortly, however, continued: "I didn't know I had such a turn of speed; but running in this weather, though internally dry work, is the very reverse externally. Just let me get rid of these wet things, and this brandy-and-water, and I will tell you my adventures. But oh, Lord! my speed was child's play to the little chap's."

"What little chap's? what is the joke?" asked Norman. "It doesn't seem a very dry one; but let's have it. What have you been up to?"

"Come, out with it, Mac," echoed Hawkes. "It is evidently too good to keep all to yourself."

"Now you two fellows are as curious as a couple of women. However, I have compassion on you. Oh, Lord! Norman, it was the most ridiculous thing you ever saw. Gad! How they ran! and how the little fellow danced! I shall never forget his face afterwards, and his look of reproach at my laughter. Oh dear! oh dear! He will be the death of me; and the fellow with the tim-tim, too." Saying which, the Scotchman burst into a prolonged roar.

The intense merriment of the worthy fellow was contagious. Without a bit knowing what he was laughing at, the two others joined in; much to the discomfiture of the grave Sheik Hussein, who came

in to say that, if the Sahibs were prepared, dinner was ready to be served.

After awhile Mackenzie became calmer; and, drawing a face of unnatural gravity, began his narrative, which was, however, interrupted by another fit, as he feebly ejaculated, "The little dancing fellow will kill me."

"Don't be so selfish, Mac," said Norman. "Here are Hawkes and myself quite prepared to be good listeners, and you won't indulge us. Control your feelings, and get safely delivered of your joke, or we won't wait to hear it."

"Well, so I want to. It's very inhuman my laughing so, for it was no joke at all for the poor little devil. But I can't help it, and I believe he will have his revenge in making me break a blood-vessel. But I am quite exhausted. Do, Hawkes, like a good fellow, brew a mug."

The mug was brewed; and Mac, having at length prepared himself, ordered dinner. During the meal, he found himself sufficiently recovered to narrate his adventures, though not without some relapses.

"Isn't it a nuisance," he said, "I lost such a whopping bear?"

"A bear? What, is he the cause of the laughter?"

"Ay! I'm just going to tell you. You know I had to strike the hills, about a mile on your left, Norman. Well, just as I approached them, I met a couple of men running to our camp. They told me a wood-cutter had seen two bears, and marked them down among some rocks, and that they were on their way to fetch us. I knew it was no use hunting for you two fellows, even had there been time; so I determined to have a shy at them by myself. I found about twenty or thirty men had assembled from a village not far distant; so I took them off with me at once. The place in which the bears were reported to be lying, was a big ravine, a sort of winding cleft, which, cut from the hill front, ran in a slanting direction. Some parts of the sides rose almost precipitously from the ravine to the table-land on the hill-top. I left it to the men entirely to conduct our plan of action. It was arranged that I should stand guard over a wooded nullah which ran into the ravine on one side, while they should go round by the other side to the head of the gorge, and tumble rocks and stones into it. I had just reached my station, and the men, in small separate parties of threes and fours, were moving along on the opposite side, about three hundred yards from where I stood, when a clattering of stones down the rocky side of the

ravine attracted my attention. This was immediately succeeded by loud shouting. I looked across, and saw a party of four or five men pelting something lower down. Presently a couple of bears scrambled up the rocks, and charged right at them. Of course they bolted for their lives, and I think I never before saw such a display of gymnastics. There were a few stunted trees, almost leafless, near the spot, and standing on open ground apart from the jungle. They were little more than bushes; but into these two or three of the men threw themselves with a monkey-like activity, which utterly passeth my understanding. The others fled in different directions towards the thicker jungle in the background. One of the bears selected one of the latter, and went his best pace along the level in pursuit. Notwithstanding the most desperate and extraordinary exertions of the long-legged fellow in front, the bear gained rapidly on him. But, fortunately, as it proved, it was the tim-tim-wallah. He had no time to fling himself into one of the trees, and, I confess, I was most anxious as to the result of the race. Preferring, however, his own skin to that of his drum, when he found there was no way of avoiding his enraged pursuer, he, as a last resource, dropped his tim-tim. Bruin at once pulled up to examine his prize, and was soon engaged in

wreaking vengeance on the hollow sounding article. Doubtless many a marriage and other native ceremony had been enlivened with the banging of that most cherished instrument; but never again, alas! was it destined to delight and charm the native ear. The enraged bear seized it with his claws; bit at it; and very soon reduced it to a state quite incompatible with any future drumming. However, the bear's attention being thus distracted, and his fury spent in the demolition of the tim-tim, its owner was enabled to make good use of his long legs, and effected his escape; while the beast, apparently satisfied with the destruction he had accomplished, lumbered away, and disappeared in the jungle.

"The other bear had fixed his special attention on a little fellow, who declined to place his speed in competition with that of his antagonist,—at least he only ran for about a dozen yards, and then scrambled with amazing rapidity into one of the small trees. It was hardly sufficient to bear his weight, but he managed to fix one foot in a cleft, and the other widely separate on a different branch, and as high above the ground as he could get. It was only about six or seven feet though, and the bear dashed up to the foot of the tree, evidently thinking he had secured his victim.

"It's a great shame to laugh," said Mac, as he recovered from the fresh burst his recital induced. "It sounds very hard-hearted; but though I felt very funky for the poor little chap, I couldn't for the life of me help it at the time.

"The bear rose on his hind legs and made a pat with the claws of one fore-foot, as if to seize one of the man's. Hanging on like grim death by the thin boughs and twigs, the little fellow had his legs stretched with his feet far apart, clutching the boughs most tenaciously with his toes, which were just about on a line with the bear's paws. When the man raised the foot aimed at out of reach, the brute made a dab with his other paw at the other foot, and so he had alternately to raise each foot as it became the object of attack. This continuing for some time, gave to both the man and his assailant the appearance of dancing. But it was varied by the poor little beggar making occasional kicks at the bear's nose as he shifted his position. The distance was too far for my rifle to tell with any certainty, though I brought it up once or twice, but was afraid to fire, as the two were so close to each other.

"We shouted, and the rest of the beaters who had huddled together shouted and yelled vigorously, and at last the bear left his active little enemy,

fortunately scathless, and came rattling down into the ravine from which he had just ascended, and right up the wooded nullah over which I was holding guard.

"It became my turn now to prepare for action, for I heard, without seeing, him scrambling amongst the stones and bushes. Presently I caught sight of him, and drove a brace of bullets into his body. He staggered, hard hit, but went off at an undiminished pace, growling like fury. I had only my double rifle with me, so as soon as I could load I posted off after him at a double, under the guidance of my shikaree. What a run I had! The very thought of it makes me thirsty."

After a brief pause, during which the narrator was engaged in temporarily satisfying a most unquenchable thirst, he continued :—

"The man thought we might intercept the beast by making a cut across to a neighbouring ravine. We did this at a pace which would have astonished your weak minds. But all the pumping and perspiring I underwent was of no use, for we saw nothing of our active friend, though I am certain I drilled a couple of holes into his fur jacket. I got the men together afterwards and beat the ravine, but nothing turned up; so, as it was getting dark, I was obliged to give up the search.

"But oh! you should have seen the faces of the tim-tim-wallah and the little dancing chap, and the forlorn expression with which the former showed me the remains of his cherished drum. However, his was an ailment capable of a consolatory salve; and I dare say most of his fellows, who chaffed him unmercifully, would willingly have exchanged places with either of them, now that the danger was over. There now, that's my adventure. I know what you fellows killed, but let me have the particulars."

Norman gave a brief account of what we already know. Hawkes also described his performances;—how he had stalked the samber which was feeding with a few others just outside some jungle, and getting a close shot, disposed of it at once; missing another with his left barrel as they galloped away.

They all decided that the hills appeared good sporting ground, and well worthy of being hunted, in event of tigers being scarce in the beds of the rivers in the plain.

The game was brought in and skinned. As on the previous evening, the three friends combined duty with pleasure; and, while enjoying the post-prandial cheroot, superintended the stretching and pegging of the skins. The choice bits of the venison, too, were selected and laid aside for their

own use. These consisted of some chops and a haunch of the cheetul, and a steak or two cut from the samber hind, together with the tongues and marrow-bones of both.

Cheetul venison is good, that of the samber coarse; but the marrow bones of the latter are incomparable. The meat, too, was most welcome as a change from a diet of the tough goat and half-fed fowls which usually form the principal part of the bill of fare of the Indian sportsman or traveller. "Sudden death" is the term by which the spatchcock of the traveller is known, and not inappropriately; for within the space of an hour the weary man may see his dinner walking about, as well as served broiled before him.

After the choice pieces had been cut from the carcases and laid aside, the latter were carried away to the village, there to be cut into shares and distributed. Nor was this operation effected in a noiseless manner. An incessant sound of many tongues had, from the first, accompanied the important business of division and allotment. The distant murmur, however, after a time swelled into such a Babel of noise as to indicate, the hunters thought, a disposition to strife. Fearing lest some of their own servants or followers might be attempting to exercise an undue influence in the distribution, or

otherwise using their masters' names in their own behoof, they proceeded to the spot, easily guided by the clamour. Under the wide-spreading branches of a fine peepul-tree, perhaps for centuries the evening resort of the village elders, they found gathered the whole population, male and female. All were speaking at once, and it was some time before the public attention was attracted to the visitors. When, however, this took place, exclamations of "The Sahibs! the Sahibs!" caused the speedy exit from the scene of some of the women, and quickly tended to allay the uproar.

The flesh of the game, cut up into blocks of meat, was lying arranged in rows on the bare ground. The contention was going on, at the end of one of these rows, over a pile of meat of imposing magnitude, and far larger than any of the others. Rugonauth stood forward as the gentlemen approached, and, amid a dead silence, replied to their interrogatories.

"What is all this row about?" asked Mackenzie. "Can't you divide the meat in peace, without quarreling over it like a pack of hungry jackals?"

"Sahib," the man said, "it is the greediness of the Patell (the village head-man). It is not our fault. The meat has been cut into portions for each house of the village; but the Patell is not satisfied,

although he has got a treble share, and has only a few mouths in his house to feed;" and he pointed to the unusually large share beside him.

"Patell, how is this?" Mackenzie demanded of a lean hungry-looking old man. "Your share seems a very ample one."

The Patell looked rather ashamed, and would willingly have now contented himself with the portion assigned him. Thus directly appealed to, however, he deemed it incumbent on him to defend his covetousness, and commenced therefore a voluble statement. Other standers-by were at once set off, moved by their desire to refute the Patell's line of argument, and the controversy seemed likely to rage as loudly as before. But Mackenzie, in a stentorian voice, commanded silence. It was his object to keep on good terms with the village head-man, whose influence it was desirable to retain in their behalf, as he might throw many obstructions in the way of procuring supplies and beaters, if rendered sulky. In a tone, therefore, of gravity, becoming the importance of the subject, Mac addressed the assembly: "As the portions of the meat," he said, "appear to be so well divided, one lot could only be increased by cutting little strips from each of the others, and that would spoil good flesh. So my advice is, that all should be now accepted without

any further dispute. On the next occasion of a kill, these gentlemen and myself will send, as a special mark of favour to the Patell, one of the steaks set apart for us, in acknowledgment of his services in assisting us. Enough. As I have spoken I will do."

This judicious decision was hailed with acclamation. The dignity of the Patell was satisfied, and the dispute at an end. Indeed, so much did the village chief esteem the gratifying condescension of the Sahib people, that he intimated his perfect readiness there and then, to do anything or go anywhere for such generous cherishers of the humble.

Having wrought the disputants to this wholesome frame of mind, the friends retired to their tents; and the whole village was shortly engaged in the delightful occupation of removing the meat.

CHAPTER IV.

A Tiger sups on Beef—Preparations made for Revenge—His first Appearance—His second—His last—Charms and Witchcraft.

After a plunge in the river on the following morning, the hunters were sitting enjoying the early cup of tea outside their tents. They were chatting over the adventures of the previous day, and speculating on what the current one would produce in the shape of sport, when a native was discerned running towards them at full speed, shouting and gesticulating wildly as he did so.

"Tiger! tiger! tiger! He has killed my cow! He has killed my cow! He has half-eaten my cow!" Such were his exclamations as he approached; and when he reached the tea-drinkers, such still continued the burden of his wailing. Apparently he considered it sufficiently explanatory to induce the sportsmen to start off at once to the rescue of the yet undemolished remains of the unfortunate cow; for it was some little time before they could obtain from him any coherent account of what had taken place.

Their first impulse, indeed, had been to jump up and get out their guns; and young Hawkes, deeming that immediate action must necessarily ensue, was already getting into his sporting costume with praiseworthy alacrity. A few questions, however, from his more experienced companions after awhile elicited the fact, that the man had not himself seen the tiger, but only the mangled body of the defunct cow. It had, he said, strayed during the night, and following its track, he had come upon it dead and partly eaten, and hastened at once to apprise the hunters of the circumstance.

"Rugonauth or some of the puggees will be sure to come across it, or, at any rate, find traces of the tiger," said Mackenzie.

"Yes," replied Norman. "There has been a tiger hovering about this jungle for some time past; and though he has not visited it for the last three or four days, they will hardly leave it unexamined. But suppose we go and have a look at the cow!"

"Don't you think it might disturb the brute? He is sure to be lying somewhere near, and might sneak off," observed the cautious Scotchman.

"Hardly. He is very likely gorged; and besides, this fellow says the cow is half a field away from the jungle."

"All right, come along then. But we had better

take our rifles in case of accident. Never mind your trowsers, Hawkes. We are not going to look for the tiger now. I shall go as I am ;" and Mackenzie led the way in drawers and slippers.

After leaving orders for the instant preparation of breakfast, and sending a summons to the village for the collection of the beaters, the three started off in their light and easy morning costume to inspect the scene of the kill.

This proved to be not more than a quarter of a mile from the camp. Conducted by the unlucky owner of the cow, accordingly, they soon reached it, and found the animal as described. It had been struck down almost without a struggle, as the ground on examination proved. After sucking the blood, the slayer had commenced his feeding operations on the body—as is usually the case—from the hinder part, a considerable portion of which had been disposed of.

The carcase lay about a hundred yards from the outskirts of the jungle ; and as the hunters were casting about for the returning track of the tiger, old Rugonauth himself was seen approaching with another man.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, *sotto voce*, as he joined the little party, "it's all right, Sahibs. The tiger is in the jungle. See, here is his pug right for it. We

came on his track on the other side; and Manajee went one way while I came this. If you will go and eat your breakfasts, I will look along the rest of this side and make certain he has not left. He is a very large tiger, Sahibs; look at the pug. It will be great shikar."

Thus advised, the three returned to camp, accompanied by the lamenting villager, whose cow had furnished the tiger's ample meal. Arraying themselves in their sporting garb, they sat down to breakfast. By the time it was finished, Rugonauth and Manajee had returned, reporting that no tracks led from the jungle, consequently that the beast was safely ringed. The beaters were rapidly assembling, and before long all were prepared for the beat.

The cover, which was in the bed of the river, was divided into three distinct parts by open spaces of considerable extent. A large pool of water, with its bank free from brushwood, but garnished with a few trees, occupied the flank of one of these. It was deemed best to beat the section thus divided from the rest of the jungle first; the hunters being stationed in occupancy of the open space. For the tiger was believed to be sleeping off the effects of his hearty meal in the section alluded to, which was that nearest to the dead cow.

The beaters were accordingly assembled at the

end nearest to the village, and not beyond two or three hundred yards from the camp; and the hunters went on to the place indicated.

Lots decided that Mackenzie should take the near side, Norman the other, and Hawkes occupy a central position. By this arrangement the tiger would have to pass within twenty or thirty yards of one of them, most probaby much nearer; and, it was hoped, in fair shot of all. The whole width of the river's bed did not there exceed one hundred yards.

Unfortunately, the situation of the trees did not permit of all three being in line, but in échelon; Norman, the most advanced, and Mackenzie the most retired—the latter, indeed, stationed within the second section of the cover. Each sportsman with a spare-gun-bearer, climbed into a tree, and made himself as comfortable as he could; not, though, without some suppressed swearing on the part of Mackenzie, whose heavy person was not so easily accommodated as those of his lighter and more active comrades.

Norman's perch was on a stunted tree,—little more than a stump indeed,—which, being on the top of the sloping bank, gave him sufficient command, and enabled him to overlook several bushes which were scattered about; though it was not

high enough to have served as a protection from a tiger's spring in event of his making so determined an assault on the position. The others were at a sufficient elevation to ensure safety in any case.

In a short while, the yelling chorus of the beaters announced that they had commenced operations; and the fizzing and spluttering of some flower-pots and bamboo-rockets, which heralded their advance, proclaimed that such light skirmishers were deemed desirable to clear the way; and they were doubtless right, for it was naturally more than usually repugnant to the tiger's feelings to have his repose disturbed, when the satisfactory nature of his midnight or morning meal rendered him unwilling to be discourteously intruded on.

Not a sign had he yet given of his presence; and, as the beaters approached the end of the patch, the hunters were beginning to think he must be lying elsewhere. Norman had just come to this conclusion, when he saw a majestic tiger walk calmly out of the jungle, and stand gazing straight before him, evidently not quite decided about making a rush over the open space in front. Norman brought up his rifle and covered him; but waited for a nearer shot, if possible. His patience was rewarded. The beast advanced another twenty yards at a walk directly towards Norman, and again

stopped, anxiously trying to make out if any enemy waited near the dreaded ground in front, in traversing which he must be fully exposed. He was distant not more than thirty yards, and the next step would take him from the shelter of the last of the scattered bushes which dotted the extremity of the jungle. The trigger was touched, and the rifle crack was the first intimation the beaters had of the proximity of the game. This was instantaneously followed by a succession of roars, which sent them flying out of the jungle, and into all the available trees near. The tiger answered to the bullet-blow by reeling; but immediately recovering himself, dashed away, tail on end, up the bank, and close by the position occupied by Norman. But the disadvantage of firing from trees is that, from being in a fixed position, it is difficult to adapt one's movements so as to aim except in certain directions. Norman had not anticipated the beast passing behind him, and was unable, therefore, so to screw himself round as to bring his rifle to bear. The beast rushed by, and receiving, without apparent harm, a bullet each from Hawkes and Mackenzie, effected his object, gained the second jungle, and disappeared within its tangled cover.

Rugonauth and Manajee soon came up, and, after a hurried consultation, it was decided to make as

fast as possible to the furthest end of the jungle, in hopes of anticipating the tiger's exit, should he break at once after skulking through it.

So, under Manajee's guidance, they set off at a double, passing by the open ground and a few cleared fields which skirted the cover. To Manajee was entrusted this duty, as his local knowledge enabled him to judge of the probable points at which the tiger might be expected to show or break away. Rugonauth remained in command of the beaters.

After a sharp trot, the shikaree pointed to two trees, intimating that two Sahibs should occupy them; and that the position in which he proposed to place the third was at the very extremity of the jungle.

Without wasting words, Norman and Hawkes remained to take possession of these two points, and Mackenzie continued on to reach the other. Norman was soon engaged in climbing into a large tree on the slope of the river bank, and just within the jungle; and unfortunate would it have been for him, if the tiger at that moment had made his appearance along the path which passed under it. In addition to this track, he commanded from his position a break in the thick cover which filled the river-bed. Hawkes was stationed in a smaller tree,

just outside the cover, and held guard over a path which there gave egress from it.

The beaters soon began, almost, indeed, before Mackenzie could reach his station, for Rugonauth lost no time in getting them into line at the place just vacated by the hunters. Norman had only time to fix himself well, and to adapt his position so as to cover the most likely places at which a tiger would be visible to him, when a suppressed "chuck" of the tongue against the teeth from his gun-bearer called for his attention. The man had climbed a good deal higher than himself, and consequently had a greater command. He was pointing with suppressed excitement in the direction of the path's course. For a few seconds Norman saw nothing; but presently the tiger came into view, walking slowly along. He let him come on, reserving his fire till he should reach a spot which would give him a clear, uninterrupted view, and allow him to aim in a convenient position. But just before he reached it the beast turned abruptly to the right, and moved directly towards Hawkes and the outside of the cover. Norman could have fired; but he thought Hawkes' shot would be more certain, as from its course the tiger would, in all probability, pass underneath him. Hawkes saw the beast advancing, let him come close, and rolled

him over with a shot. With a low growl, instead of a roar, this time, however, he again recovered himself, and slipped back into the denser part of the cover.

"Did you hit him?" asked Norman of Hawkes, who, though so near, was invisible.

"Yes, he came right under my tree. He seems awfully done. Can you make anything of his whereabouts?"

"No, I can't get a sight of—but—oh! confound it! Ah! Hoo! Chugh!—help here, you gun-fellow."

"Why, what are you up to, Norman?" demanded Hawkes, anxiously. "Is the tiger trying to get at you?"

"No, no. Botheration! Oh Lord! how they nip! I have been sitting in a red-ant's nest, or on their public highway, or some other favourite resort. Oh! the vindictive little wretches. They are all over me."

From sundry slappings and flappings, Hawkes rightly conjectured that Norman and his attendant were endeavouring to overcome the onslaught of the ants. But as they were brushed off in one part, they seemed to swarm to the attack in another. In the very midst of his exertions to shake off his tormenters, Norman's eye fell on the break in the

alert to catch the slightest glimpse or the smallest sound.

"He's lame, Sahib," whispered Rugonauth, after a few yards. "His right leg is going lame."

After a little, the open passage through the jungle somewhat widened, it being one evidently used by animals to conduct them to the drinking-place, and also for the purpose of enabling them to avoid the intricacies of the cover when moving from one place to another. Large boulders of rock here and there rose above the low brushwood, and the path in many places wound among and around them.

Two or three men, who were following in the wake for that purpose, climbed into trees, which the hunters passed, to obtain a look-out over the jungle in the front and flanks of the still advancing party, and give warning of any movement they might observe. As each boulder was reached too, before being rounded, the leaders, with fingers on trigger, carefully examined the other side to see that no enemy lay there in ambush.

Presently glimpses of the water were obtained through the bushes, and Hawkes managed to take his place in the front rank, though with some difficulty, the branches of jungle having frequently to be thrust aside to enable him to remain there. Moving thus compactly in line, they reached the

more open space about the pool ; and almost simultaneously detected the tiger lying at its very edge, with his head and paws in the water.

Mackenzie, who from his position on the right, had the clearest view, perhaps was the first by a second to catch sight of the game, and quickly ejaculated : "Look out ! there he is. Dead, though, I believe. I'll fire to make sure."

This he did ; while the other two brought up their rifles and stood prepared. The only response to Mackenzie's shot was the dull sound the bullet made as it entered the body. The beast was quite dead ; and a few steps in advance showed them that it was lying with the face and paws in the water, having evidently died in the act of taking its last drink.

It proved to be a magnificent male tiger ; and the body showed that three bullets had entered it, besides the last shot of Mackenzie's. One had struck the chest ; another almost penetrated the depth of his body, entering near the spine ; and a third had broken the bone of the shoulder.

A triumphant death-yell soon brought the beaters swarming down into the cover, chattering incessantly as they did so.

A couple of boughs were soon cut from the trees and shaped into long poles by the ready axes of the

men, many of whom carried those useful implements wherever they went. Strips of jow or other withe-like jungle shrub, or the bark of trees, served as lashings; and the tiger's paws were soon bound to the poles, and the latter raised on the shoulders of half a dozen men, three in front and the same number behind. With constant relief from the rest, they carried the tiger, thus slung, in triumph to the camp.

All the servants were on the look-out as the procession approached, eager to inspect the formidable creature, whose extraordinary dimensions and destructive habits had long been themes of village gossip, and given rise to many highly embellished stories of his power and voracity.

Not a few were the congratulations of those whose cattle had furnished meals to the destroyer; and it was amid exclamations of satisfaction, and much abuse of the tiger itself, and all its female relatives, that old Rugonauth applied a lighted brand to the noble whiskers with which its face was well garnished.

"What are you doing that for, Rugonauth?" asked Hawkes.

"Ah, Sahib!" he said; "it would be wrong to leave them. Much harm might come."

"How do you mean much harm?" inquired the

young sportsman. "What is bad about them? They look very nice on the skin."

"I do it, Sahib, to prevent any one getting hold of them. Much mischief might be the consequence. He might haunt us. Any one, too, getting possession of these hairs might commit Jado (sorcery) on his enemy, or mix them with his food and poison him."

"Bewitch him! Poison him!" Hawkes exclaimed. "What, are the hairs poisonous?"

"Well, Sahib, I do not know that they are altogether like poison; but if chopped up and given with the food, they would have an evil influence. So I take good care no one shall cut them off for his own use. There now, you old rascal," he added, addressing the dead tiger, "now you can do no harm."

"Is it only the whiskers from which harm comes?" asked Hawkes.

"It is all that is hurtful," was the reply. "But the claws are capital charms, and some other parts are very good for rheumatism."

"He speaks the words of truth," observed Sheik Hussein, who had been an attentive and gratified listener to the foregoing conversation. "The Sahibs have had great luck. May it ever be great! I shall be much rejoiced if the Sahibs will allow me

to have two claws, to fasten round the arm of my child."

"When they are cut out, you shall have two," said Mackenzie, who just then joined the party round the tiger. "But see that they are all collected, and none pilfered by the villagers."

"I will obey your honour's commands," was the respectful reply of the old servant. But when his master had retired, he deputed Norman's young, scampish, dressing-boy, Baloo, to undertake that important duty, greatly to the latter's satisfaction. Mr. Baloo proclaimed aloud that *he* should permit no purloining, and was very imperious and exacting in demanding the surrender to him of every individual claw. The process of skinning, too, was one in which he took infinite delight, having received some private instructions from his master.

The day was yet young; so after a light tiffin of cold cheetul and thin, unleavened cakes—called locally, in some parts of Bombay, "apps," and elsewhere "chupatties"—washed down with some brandy-and-water, the sportsmen resolved to try the plain country in the immediate neighbourhood, for peafowl, partridges, or any other small game they might meet, with which to replenish the exhausted larder.

As they intended to beat the hills for bears, when tigers should no longer be procurable in the rivers, they thought it best not again to disturb by a few hours' desultory sporting and chance of a shot, the ground, where, with good early morning arrangements, bears might be marked down.

To the English sportsman, it may appear strange that partridges should be shot in May. But in India there are no game-laws, nor is there restriction as to season. As the whole country is open to be shot over at the will of the sportsman, and probably no limited preservation would lead to the increase of game birds, he destroys them wherever or whenever he desires. Nor does the breeding-season often deter him; though, as the cold weather is the most convenient and pleasant for the pursuit of small game, the use of his shot-gun is usually limited to that time, and to a portion of the monsoon.

I have used the term "breeding-season;" but whether, after all, that is confined to a certain period, I should think extremely doubtful. There are one or two species of wild-duck which visit the tanks during the monsoon, as well as in the cold weather; and I have seen young progenies of one particular species at both seasons. The grey partridge, too, with its young brood, I have observed

in many various months, and found the eggs of the painted partridge in August.

However this may be, the hunters were not deterred by any scruples on the score of season from adding to their bill of fare; regarding the destruction at any time of eatable fowls of the air as quite legitimate when they were required for food. So they returned soon after sunset with one or two peafowl, a hare, a grey partridge or two, and some green pigeons; some of which were converted into a stew, while they were enjoying their usual evening swim, and soon after appeared on the dinner-table.

"Are all these people as superstitious as old Rugonauth describes them?" asked Hawkes after dinner, as they sat discussing the day's events. "Do they really believe so profoundly in 'Jado'?"

"Yes," replied Norman. "The power to bewitch is attributed to many; and strange to say,—notwithstanding the punishment which too often falls to their lot,—those believed to possess the power very frequently admit it."

"It gives them consideration among their people, and attracts a respect they certainly wouldn't get without," observed Mackenzie. "But, on the whole, I should think it was rather a dangerous accomplishment. Frightful atrocities are committed under

guise of ascertaining the truth, and punishing the perpetrator of some supposed bewitchment."

"And," continued Norman, "often the slightest, most puerile reason is quite sufficient to induce a man to bring the accusation. Anything which will give a colouring to the enmity one person may entertain for another—any pretext—is sufficient to make others agree with him that he is under an evil influence. If a man gets some ache or pain for which he can't account, or which will not succumb to the nostrums of the village barber, he very frequently sets it down to 'Jado,' or some spell which has been worked on him. And if he has any grudge against some poor, harmless old woman, she has every chance of being accused of having bewitched him."

"Is it always the old women who get the credit?" inquired Hawkes.

"Not always. Any one who is an enemy of the sufferer, old or young, of either sex, may be suspected; but it is usually the old women who are supposed to be gifted with the power. And as long as they can sway others through fear of its being exercised on them, it's all right, and they reap the benefit of it. But when they are believed to have really done so, it sometimes goes hard with them."

"Ah! then," exclaimed Hawkes, "I suppose there

are not often Indian witches of the Tam o'Shanter stamp. The lively young lady in the 'cutty sark' is not of a species prevalent in the tropics."

"No. But *she* was an exceptional one, even in Tam's day. Remember, all her companions were old and ugly. I suppose her youth was the reason why she is represented as outflying the rest, and capturing the mare's tail, and so nearly bringing her rider to grief."

"How do they try or punish them? As of old, by ducking?"

"By all sorts of ways. Tying the head in a bag of powdered chillies and hanging the accused up by the heels, is an unpleasant way of arriving at truth not uncommonly practised. But, after all, some of our English boors are not much better. I read an account the other day of an old Frenchman who died from the effects of a ducking administered by some bold Britons, who chose to fancy the poor creature a sorcerer."

CHAPTER V.

A speculative Beat—Its results—Contemplated change of Camp—Manajee's Day—Bear-shooting—A double Death—Bears' Grease—Striking the Camp.

It was late next morning before any emissary arrived from Rugonauth. Indeed, noon was already past, when a man came in to say that a tiger had been marked down in some jow jungle near that in which the tigress was killed, and in the same river. It had moved about in an unsettled manner; and hence, the man stated, the delay in sending information.

The hunters were speedily on the move, and in due time joined Rugonauth. It was soon evident to Mackenzie and Norman that some doubt existed in the old man's mind as to the exact whereabouts of the tiger, though he professed to be satisfied that it was lying in the jungle he proposed beating. But his hesitating manner, and his repeated cautions not to make the slightest noise for fear of disturbing the beast; his lack of excited energy also; and altogether an inexplicable something about him,

led the two older and more practised hunters to conjecture that the beat was one on speculation. That *hope* of a find, rather than the certainty, was at present influencing the acute and experienced shikaree. They had too much confidence in his sincerity, as well as in his woodcraft, to think that the old fellow meant either to deceive those whom his jungle science had so often assisted, or that he was himself deceived. They had little doubt a tiger had been about; but where he then might be, they believed to be a matter of uncertainty; and the result justified their apprehensions.

The strip of jungle was beaten, and two other patches also, including the one memorable as the scene of the tigress' death; but nothing was discovered by any one. And, at last, Rugonauth was obliged to confess that the animal's retreat had from the first been uncertain, and that he must have eluded them.

"He has been wandering about," he said, "a good deal, Sahib, during the night and early morning, and his pugs cross so much as to render it difficult to find out the latest. I was in hopes he might have been in that jungle we first beat; but now I have no confidence about finding him. I do not know where he has gone, but think he must have returned to the hills."

"Then you do not propose beating any more?" asked Mackenzie.

"No, Sahib. It will only be bothering the Sahibs for nothing. The tigers have not come well down from the hills yet. The season has not been hot enough, and the water is not dried up there."

"Then don't you expect to find any more at present about the rivers down here in the plains?"

"No, Sahib," replied Rugonauth. "In a few days more, with this heat, they will seek the rivers. Those we have killed, and others which come about, have wandered a great deal. If it suits the Sahibs, they might try the hills for a few days, and then come back here."

"But where do you propose going?" inquired Norman.

"I met a man yesterday," was the reply, "who told me that right amongst the hills, near the village of Oonge, from which he had come, several cattle had been killed by tigers, and it is a good country for bears. If your honour orders, I will go and see what truth there is in the report. I sent off a man yesterday to make inquiries."

"I should certainly like a good beat among those ravines in the first range before we leave Mungaum, Mac. Don't you think so?" asked Norman, in English, of his friend.

"Most certainly," was the reply. "Old Rugonauth thinks far more about tigers, because his rewards for them are so much larger. But I confess I like bear-shooting hugely, and vote we pay some attention to the hairy ones."

"And get some grease, eh!" suggested Hawkes.

"Get grease, too, and keep our engagements to the ladies. I suppose you have promised no end of bottles!"

"Well, we are agreed then," said Norman, "as to a beat in the hills. So now let us have Rugonauth's views."

The proposal was then explained to him, and he was good enough to express his approval of it. It was further arranged that he should start that evening for Oonge, and leave the management of the morrow's beat to Manajee.

This matter settled, the party rode off to the tents.

Invested with the dignity of manager of the day's proceedings, Manajee was naturally anxious that they should be successful; and thus produce éclat and emolument for himself, and satisfaction to his employers. By the first streak of dawn, accordingly, he had placed men on several elevated spots among the hills and ravines to watch for, and mark down, any bears moving about. Tracking was of little

use, where the rugged nature of the ground presented difficulties which even the most expert could hardly overcome. He knew the ground well, and had selected the several positions assigned to his assistants with judgment.

Consequently, when it was fairly light, a couple of bears were discovered, and, by eight o'clock, a messenger arrived in the camp to summon the sportsmen to the scene of their retreat.

The breakfast, already in process of consumption, was hastily finished, the ponies saddled, and the party soon under way with the beaters in company. It did not take them long to reach the foot of the hills ; but as it was yet some distance from the place where the bears were supposed to be reposing, they, with considerable difficulty, managed to ride up the ascent. Another mile or so brought them to a group of trees, under which Manajee and a couple of men were waiting for them. The remaining markers were posted round the jungle, and there kept watch and ward over the unsuspicious game.

This was lying in a considerable tract of jungle situated in a hollow surrounded by hills, with three principal approaches to its dense recesses.

It was determined to beat from the direction of one of these, leaving the other two to be guarded

by the hunters. To Mac's lot it fell to occupy the side of a nullah, over which, and a portion of the bare hill-side it seamed, he had full command. The other two were stationed together on the side of a slope, towards a hollow in which converged several wild-beast tracks, after intersecting the jungle in various directions. The slope was covered with disconnected patches of jungle, but just in their front, and between them and the main thicket, stretched an open space of some fifteen yards in breadth. This they covered, ensconcing themselves behind a bush to conceal themselves from any beast breaking across it.

"Well," said Norman, in a whisper, "if they break here, we ought to give a good account of them. But it looks doubtful, with so much jungle about the sides of the hills; I have great faith in old Manajee, though. He seems to know both the haunts and the habits of the game well, and if his bundobust (a term implying the arrangements for the beat, and all the previsional preparations connected with it) is good, we may have the luck to get our friends here."

"I am sure, I hope so," was the reply in the same low tone of voice. "I long to get a shot at a bear. It would be glorious to bag both. There's the grease, too.'

"Are your engagements deep in the matter of that article?" asked Norman.

"Why, yes, I confess I have been rash enough to pledge myself pretty heavily," the young fellow admitted, with a bit of a blush showing even through the brick-dusty complexion sun and exposure had produced.

"Are your promised favours general? or is the principal portion to be reserved for one fair individual? Ah! I suspect Miss Verney will benefit most by your success."

"Now, don't chaff! If I have promised that young lady, it is only reasonable. She has the prettiest and softest hair in the station."

"And therefore the less requires the addition of grease," said Norman. "I will take your word for its being soft, as I cannot speak from actual experience—tangible experience. Now, if you had only promised old Mrs. Jenkins a bottle or two, it would have been real charity. *I* have done so."

"Because you couldn't help yourself," retorted Hawkes. "I heard all about the old woman bullying you at dinner, the last time you dined with the Brigadier. But hang it, she might have been contented with one bottle. I hear she asked for six. Is that true?"

Norman laughed as he replied, "Quite true. But

I was equal to the occasion, and promised three bottles from the animals which I shot. What do you think of tiger's fat? I don't see why it should not be as provocative of hair as that of bears; and then it might possibly impart the ruddy tinge so much the fashion. You fellows are not half wide-awake. I bottled off both the tigers."

"Bottled them off?" inquired Hawkes with surprise.

"Yes. I set that young imp, Baloo, to secure all the fat and melt it. I have several old beer bottles full. I shall just pour in a suspicion of bear's grease as a salve to my conscience, and there you have a nice present for the old woman."

"No end of a dodge!" exclaimed his companion, applaudingly. "But then I wouldn't like to deceive Miss Verney."

"Miss Verney! I should think not. It would be downright sacrilege to make her apply essence of tiger to her 'bonnie brown hair.' But if the old woman's becomes striped, it won't much signify. Like you, I have disposed of most of what we are likely to obtain of the genuine. The little Penrose, with her winning ways, has been almost as urgent an applicant as the General's wife; but then she has more reason, with her beautiful sunny curls."

"Just now," returned Hawkes, "the beauty of

the hair was a reason for there being no necessity for the grease. I don't suppose you intend profaning her 'sunny curls' with balm of tiger, do you?"

"Certainly not," was the decided rejoinder. "But we must keep quiet, for I see the beaters have got round. Keep a sharp look-out; we must first catch our bears, and then bottle them off."

The line of beaters being formed, and parties detached with matchlocks to make a noise at those places from which, if unoccupied, Manajee considered there was a chance of the game breaking, the word was given, and the first yell arose.

"There they are!" ejaculated Hawkes, after the beaters had advanced a little. "Shall I fire?"

"No, no; don't be in a hurry," Norman quickly said. "I see them; but on no account fire; it will only make them break back. They are listening;" and he anxiously watched the two dark objects, which loomed black and indistinct in the deep shade of the thicket. While he spoke, however, they moved out of sight; but again appeared, going in a direction far to their flank, and on the side opposite to that occupied by Mackenzie.

"Ah! that's all right; they have turned," Norman continued, after a brief exciting interval of suspense. "It is fortunate Manajee thought of placing men

on that path. They evidently didn't like to face them."

For a time nothing more was seen of them; but, as the beaters approached, a tremendous din every now and then announced that some one had viewed the game; and shortly the bears, one closely following in the wake of the other, broke at a lobbing gallop directly in front of the position of the two expectant sportsmen, and straight across the open ground towards them.

Norman was quickest, and dropped the leading bear with his first bullet, the second receiving the contents of his left barrel. Hawkes also brought his rifle to bear on the second one, and almost in the same instant with Norman, fired on the beast. Directly he was struck, the latter rose on his hind legs, and roaring with rage and pain, threw himself savagely on his prostrate companion, furiously striking and tearing at him with his claws. It may have been but the impulse of pain urging him to rend anything within his reach, but it appeared as if he, in some manner, connected his sufferings with his friend, and for some ursine reason attributed them to him. If such was the case, Hawkes' left barrel corrected the erroneous impression under which he laboured; for on receiving it when in the full fury of his unnatural attack, he imme-

diately desisted, turned tail, and re-entered the jungle.

"Take care," shouted Norman to the beaters; "one has gone back badly wounded."

At this intimation the men, who were much scattered, congregated into groups at different open spots; indeed, had done so at the first warning of the shots and growling of the bear; but now they stood prepared with their axes in readiness, for the jungle was too extensive for those in the centre to attempt to gain the outside.

Seizing their second guns, Norman and Hawkes quickly went up to the first bear which was lying dead. It had fallen to one bullet well and truly delivered at the junction of the neck and chest. Without anything more than a cursory glance, and a pull at the body to satisfy themselves that life was extinct, they advanced without delay to the spot at which number two had disappeared. It was a very narrow track along which they now found it necessary to thread their way through the bushes, which obliged them to do so in Indian file. To Norman, as the older and more wary, it naturally fell to lead, but Hawkes remained close behind him prompt and ready.

Though a bear will charge home,—and indeed is frequently more dreaded by the natives than a tiger,

for he will often attack without the slightest provocation where a tiger would slip away,—yet in following a wounded animal there can be no comparison between the danger attending the pursuit of the two. The lightning rush of a tiger, giving barely time to discharge one barrel, is very different from the slower movements of a bear. To follow the former through thick jungle is, when his whereabouts is unknown, foolhardy ; and I fear our hunters were not quite free from that imputation when they sought the one they had last killed.

Norman knew that even a bear was an ugly customer at close quarters, so he made his progress with caution. He had not advanced, however, many yards, when he detected the black mass of hair lying in front, and immediately fired into it. But it was unnecessary ; for number two had also succumbed to the force and correctness of the fire with which he had been received by the masked battery on the hill-side.

"I call that a sharp piece of work, and well performed," Norman exclaimed, as they stood examining the defunct bear. "You are certain, Hawkes, of some of the genuine now. But we must warn Mac and Manajee." And the speaker howled forth an intimation of the success which had befallen them.

Mackenzie soon appeared, and, while inspecting

the dead, growled "Ha! Hum! Lucky beggars! I should like to have had a finger in the pie. Did the first fall dead?"

"As a herring," replied Norman. "It was as neatly polished off as could be with a single bullet. The second one pitched into it like fun directly it was struck; but whether it conceived the pain to be administered by its friend, or just tackled the first thing it could lay paws on, I don't know."

"Ah!" said Mackenzie, "I have heard of them doing that, but never myself saw it. These are both females too—evidently mother and daughter. Observe, the first killed is barely full-grown, while the other, by her bare teats and ragged look about the sides and belly, is decidedly a motherly old party."

"Most unnatural treatment on her part of her daughter, then," observed Hawkes. "But, Mac, do you think we shall get much grease from them?"

"How confoundedly anxious you appear about the grease, Hawkes!" Mackenzie rejoined. "But, yes, I should say we should get a fair supply; they are in very fair condition for the season. You will be able to keep some of your fat engagements."

"That's all right," said Hawkes. "But what do you think, Mac? Norman has already secured several bottles of grease."

"Eh! how's that? You don't mean to say any natives have brought in bears of their own killing?"

"No," answered Norman; "but my horsekeeper spoke of 'tiger leg-mutton.' Why shouldn't we have tiger bear's-grease also?"

"Oh, you villain!" shouted the huge fellow, in great merriment. "You don't really mean to say you intend palming it off?"

"Don't I, though?" was the reply. "If old Mrs. Jenkins doesn't apply some tiger-fat to her old scalp, it won't be my fault. I hope she won't come out in stripes."

"It would be a most gratifying thing if she did, I think; for then she would have to make a clean shave, and take to wigs, which would be a decided improvement on her exceedingly scanty *coiffure*."

"Well, well! Let the poor old lady do as she likes," observed Norman, compassionately. "Only mind, neither of you fellows destroy her innocent belief in the efficacy of the oleaginous compound with which I shall present her. After all, it exists in the imagination. That will do just as much as a plaster of bear-fat on her head. But what are we to do now? Here comes Manajee. Let's hear what he has to say."

Manajee joined them, and, after being compli-

mented on the good arrangements he had made, and the success attending his "bundobust," replied,

"Yes; and your honour and the young Sahib fed the bears well with bullets. I was directing the beaters from yonder rock, and my heart swelled when I saw the first fall as it eat the Sahib's bullet. Your lordship is a great sportsman; and I am the best shikaree in these parts, and know every bush and stone, and am a tree-to-tree guide." Having delivered himself with much satisfaction of his usual vaunt, he politely requested to know what the Sahibs purposed doing.

"Do you think there will be any use in beating the ravines along the front of the hills on chance?" inquired Norman.

"The Sahib's luck is great!" was the reply. "If it be destined that he shall kill any more to-day, he will kill. What will be, will be!"

There was no disputing this self-evident proposition. But, as it was not completely satisfactory in respect of the opinion entertained by Manajee as to the likelihood of success, Norman varied his question.

"Did you see any bears' tracks about? A good many of the trees appeared to be scratched by their climbing, I observed as I came along."

"There is another bear about, Sahib. I saw his

fresh pug this morning. If it be pleasing to the Sahibs, then, we will beat the ravines. Perhaps he will come into our hands."

"Very well," said Mackenzie. "But these dead bears had better be taken to the camp at once, and skinned."

"And take great care of the fat, mind," enjoined Hawkes.

"The fat!" repeated Manajee. And he looked to Mackenzie for explanation, thinking the "chota Sahib" (literally "little gentleman"—the diminutive term being applicable here to age and position, and not to stature) had made a mistake.

"Yes, we wish to keep the fat," said the individual appealed to. "You must have it all cut off and carefully preserved. The Sahib people use it."

"Ah! I understand, Sahib," Manajee replied, with a knowing look. "The Doctor Sahibs use it for rheumatism, and to keep away evil spirits. I will send my brother to see that it is taken care of."

Without enlightening the shikaree as to the use to which it was destined to be applied, Mackenzie merely reiterated his orders for its careful preservation; and young Hawkes made promises of largess if the supply proved abundant.

A neighbouring pool of very dirty water fur-

nished a drink, somewhat unpleasantly thick, to the beaters. Indeed, so soupy was its character, that many used the soiled and ragged ends of their puggrees as strainers before imbibing it; and not, as far as the hunters could observe, with any very marked purifying effect.

The choguls supplied the gentlemen themselves with a purer draught; though frequently had they been forced, on other occasions, to rest contented with water as bad as, or worse than, that now satisfying the craving thirst of the beaters. Strong exercise under an Indian sun is wonderfully efficacious in banishing extreme nicety on the score of drink.

After all were satisfied, and a little rest and smoke and chat over the brief affair had refreshed the whole party, they started to beat one or two of the most likely ravines which indented the hills. One was beaten without effect; but out of the second a samber or two broke back through the beaters, without, however, the hunters getting a chance at them. After this, they returned to camp.

Before dinner was over, an emissary from Rugonauth was announced, and informed them that the shikaree had in the morning found the fresh pugs of one or two tigers near Oonge. From the

inquiries he had made, too, he had satisfied himself they might find tigers, perhaps, and certainly bears there, and therefore considered the Sahibs should at once change their camp.

As they coincided in this opinion, orders were immediately issued to pack up, and prepare for a night march; warning of the probability of such having previously been given.

Ere long, with the jabbering of many voices—the possessor of each thinking more of instructing his neighbour than working himself—was mingled the sound of hammering tent-pegs to loosen them from the ground. But above all arose the gurgling growling of the camels, as they were brought up and made to sit previous to being loaded. The noise they emit, as they open their capacious jaws and make as if to seize, with their fearful-looking teeth, any tangible unprotected portion of the person loading them, is alarming in the extreme to the unaccustomed.

Before the preparations were complete, the young moon had sunk, and all the horse litter and other rubbish was thrown on the fires—which were lighted in several spots to aid the people in their labours—causing them to burn up bright and throw a lurid glare on all objects within their irradiation. Some of the camels appeared defined strongly against the

light; others, more removed and less distinct in the gloom, like dim unearthly spectres. Boxes and packages of various shapes and sizes, fallen tents, beds, baskets with fowls cackling in them, horses, and, among all, many people flitting to and fro, completed the picture of the little camp in course of removal.

By nine o'clock the last package had been stowed, and the last pull given at the ropes which bound the various articles to the pack-saddles of the camels. The latter were standing in irregular fashion, but in two bodies, with the nose of one tied to the tail of its immediate predecessor on the line of march—a man in charge of each party—waiting for the signal to move off. The led-horses were ready, and old Sheik Hussein's pony was tied to a tree, prepared to receive, on its bone-protruding frame, the well-cased carcase of the portly Mussulman. Terry and Boxer too, in charge of a very dirty attendant, were duly paraded with chains attached to their collars.

The word was given, and the little procession, soon dropping into order, moved off into the darkness. But its position could be distinguished for some distance from the blazing oil-fed torch carried by the guide.

Sheik Hussein was the last to leave, as he lin-

gered to fortify himself with a whiff at the cheery hubble-bubble, before committing the safety of his person to the ill-fed, raw-boned creature which was by courtesy called his "horse." Soon, however, he, too, was on the move; for he had a wholesome dread of the perils of the jungle and the spirits of darkness, and cared not to loiter far behind his companions, to brave them singly.

As the fires smouldered and burnt out, darkness again fell on the spot so lately the scene of noise and movement. But it was not quite deserted, for the three hunters remained behind. Their beds, guns, washing-stands, and the materials for an early breakfast were all that it was considered necessary to retain; one servant to look after these, and one camel to convey them, with their three ponies, being also left behind.

Intending to hunt, on their way, in the morning, they now slept the sleep of the just under one tree.

CHAPTER VI.

False "khubber"—Buried Cities—The stronghold of a Bear—Its impregnability—The Terrors of the Jungle—A native Sportsman—Snipe in a Bush—An old Story retold.

THEY arose betimes next morning, and after a very early meal, packed off the remaining camel, while they themselves awaited news from Manajee, who had again gone out in search of bears. An hour or two later news arrived, but not from Manajee. A man came in from a village three or four miles away, bringing tidings of a tiger having been near it during the night, and that some men had marked it down.

Mackenzie and Norman were not very sanguine, as they knew how unreliable very frequently is the "khubber" thus casually furnished. However, they would not run the risk of missing a chance, and so accompanied the villager to the place indicated, which, unfortunately, was far from the line of their intended operations on the route towards the new camp.

The Mungaum beaters were left where they were, as the strange villager assured them that his "gaum" could supply enough for the occasion.

But the whole affair appeared to be a "plant," for the sake of extracting from the pockets of the hunters a few rupees. At least, it was very evident the men who professed to have seen the tiger, knew very little about the beast; and Norman declared the pug, when shown to him, was two or three days old. It was probably hoped the tiger might be found, and thus the handsome "Inam" (reward) find its way to the head man of the village, while the beaters received the usual daily pay.

But after beating one or two places in vain, Mackenzie, with much profanity of language, spoke his mind freely to the leader of the beat. He informed him he was fortunate in having so placable a person to deal with, otherwise he would certainly not have escaped, after so great an imposition, in a sound skin. The beaters were probably in the secret; but as they could hardly be considered much to blame in obeying the summons of their village chief, each received a half-day's pay, very much to their delight; for, after seeing that the Sahib people had not been imposed on, they looked for more kicks than halfpence.

The sportsmen were much chagrined to find, on

returning to Mungaum, that a messenger from Manajee had long been waiting their arrival, with the information that a female bear and cub had been marked down into a cave. The afternoon was well advanced, and as they had still twelve or fourteen miles of a hilly jungle road to ride to reach Oonge, they feared that the bear, unless killed without any delay, might escape them.

Accompanied by the Mungaum beaters accordingly, they lost no time in following their guide to the place where Manajee had appointed to meet them. This was said to be near a fine spring of water, about four miles up a valley on the road to Oonge. In due course this was reached; and Manajee, greatly deploring the loss of time, inveighed in no measured terms against the village and all it contained, whose false reports had thus been the cause of delaying the Sahibs.

Man, woman, and child, he gave over to perdition; with many most uncomplimentary remarks, reflecting on the chastity of the female population, past, present, and future. It appeared that there was some rivalry between the two villages; and the delinquents, jealous of the emolument derived from the Sahibs by those with whom they were at enmity, had taken advantage of the absence of the shikarees, and endeavoured to attract a portion of the good

things going to themselves, with what result we have seen.

As they sat under some splendid forest trees to allow the beaters to refresh before proceeding to attack the stronghold of Bruin, Hawkes remarked—

"Where is the spring? I don't see any signs of water. The nullah is as dry as a stick."

"I don't know," said Norman, looking round. "Here, Manajee, fill our choguls, if the water is clear, before the beaters dirty it; and see if there are any pugs around the edge."

"It is not a pool of water, Sahib," was the reply; "it is a well."

"A well?" asked Mackenzie, incredulously. "How did that get here? Let me see it." And, accordingly, he was conducted to a deep stone-built well, overhung by ancient trees of large growth, which shadowed the adjacent ground for some extent, and contrasted strongly with the wild and desolate aspect of the surrounding jungle.

"Who would have imagined finding such traces of man in this howling wilderness?" said Hawkes to Norman. "And look, too, at these blocks of stone. Several of them bear traces of carving."

"And very fine carving too," was the reply. "Some of this is coarse marble. This must be the

site of some one of those ancient towns which lie buried in the jungle waste."

Observing the attention the remains excited, and in answer to their inquiries, Manajee remarked: "There are many similar spots, Sahibs, in the most lonely and unfrequented places in these hills. Towns and villages were here before our day."

"But there are no traces of cultivation, or even many mounds, to show where old habitations have stood," observed Hawkes.

"No, Sahib," the native replied. "They were not in the time of my father or my father's father. But the report of them has been handed down from father to son for numbers of generations."

"The jungle indeed seems to have obliterated most traces of man," said Norman. "I suppose the houses, being mostly built of unburnt brick, have crumbled to dust, and left no sign where overgrown by the bush. How completely nature resumes its sway where man has, for some reason or other, retired from his contest with the luxuriance of tropical growth! It brings forcibly home to one the mere impotence of the miserable puny creature man, when in the space of a few generations all traces of his existence are swept from the earth. The tiger or bear rears its cubs in undisturbed solitude, perhaps on the very spot, where a mother

dandled her babes in the midst of a thriving city. All these old trees have seen generations pass away, and still live to look down on the waste which has succeeded the thriving haunts of a dead race."

"Hear, hear!" said the unsentimental Mackenzie, with mock applause. "Not so bad that, Norman. We must get you to give a lecture on the subject when we return to Jehangeerpore. That touch about the mother dandling her unborn babe—no, I don't mean unborn," he said, correcting himself, "her babes—would bring down a round of plaudits from the women. But it's all nonsense, you know!"

"Mac," retorted Norman, "you are incorrigible. You are about as susceptible of sentiment or romance as a hyæna. What a confoundedly tough-minded chap you are, breaking in on my fancies with your unpleasantly material way of viewing things! I don't believe you have an atom of imagination."

"Haven't I? Now I strongly imagine just at present that we had better be moving, or we shan't have time to stir up our friend in the cave, and reach camp by dinner time. And I must confess that the substantial merits of mug have more charms for me than any amount of ancient towns which have disappeared."

As there could be no denying that the practical Mackenzie was correct in his estimate of the limited

time which remained before dark, the party continued on their way towards the bear's resting place. But as it was yet distant, the subject of the old jungle-buried towns was discussed by Norman and Hawkes.

The latter considered that the fact of there being only one well was indicative of the smallness of the place which it had furnished with water. But his companion reminded him that many more might be concealed in the tangled brushwood ; this one alone having been preserved to satisfy the requirements of those who occasionally trod the wild path, which, little used though it was, was the most direct means of communication between some of the villages lying in the heart of the hills and those in the plain.

They had heard of the existence of such extensive remains as are to be seen at Chunderwattee or Chundrautee, near the foot of mount Aboo, in Rajpootana, with its white marble temples still partly standing, rearing their ruined heads midst the undergrowth. Other deserted cities they had seen, too, and read of ; so that it seemed by no means improbable that many towns, as Manajee had asserted, lay buried in the jungle.

They reminded them of the deserted cities of Central America, the sole relics of an extinct or

migrated race, and the only record of the magnificence in which they had passed away.

Though far less attractive in point of size and splendour of their buildings, these ruined cities of Hindostan are sufficiently so to render an examination of them by the experienced, possibly both pleasant and profitable. However, neither of the conversers being archæologists, their surmises are not worthy of record.

After they had proceeded about a mile, a rocky eminence was pointed out as the bear's stronghold.

On the summit of a hill was strewn a confused mass of boulders of rock scattered irregularly about; some tossed—as if by a former convulsive throe of the hill itself—one on the other in a jumbled chaotic heap. Amongst them existed many crevices, holes, and dark apertures; but only one apparently extensive enough to admit the entrance of so large an animal as a bear.

Against the rock here, stones had been piled so as to block up the passage. The cavern—for it extended far among the rocks, and probably into the heart of the hill itself—was doubtless a favourite resort of wild beasts, as was evident from the signs plentifully scattered about. The recent traces of an animal showed that it had entered the cave that day, and the look-outs, who had been patiently waiting

there on the watch since early morning, declared that no effort had been made by it to force a passage through the stones which they had piled up.

"He is evidently safe in there," said Norman, after examining with Manajee a sandy spot just outside. "His traces are recent, and do not return. But how to get him out is the question."

There was no time, however, to be lost; so the three hunters having taken up positions,—one above, and the other two at the side of the aperture,—the men soon cleared away the stones in front. They then began to howl about the rocks, and in at the various fissures and cracks, hoping to startle the sleeping game into an abrupt exit.

Guns were fired off, too, the sound reverberating sharply among the rocks. Flower-pots and crackers were next resorted to; some of the latter being dropped into those holes which seemed to have some connection with the main cavern. They were then thrown in from the mouth, as far as was practicable; but without producing any sign of Bruin's presence within.

A long stick, some twelve or fifteen feet in length, was next cut from a neighbouring branch of bamboos, and a rocket affixed to the end and lighted. This was thrust in as far as it would go, and the

operation repeated with crackers; but all of no avail in inducing the beast to show.

As a last resource, it was determined to try and smoke him out. A heap of dead leaves and dry wood was soon collected, pushed in some distance, and then lighted. But the escape of the smoke through various crevices showed, too surely, that enough would not reach the beast to force him to make a bolt of it. And as no growl had even been heard, he probably lay far out of reach of all that could be done from the mouth of the cave. After ineffectually trying every device which occurred to them, and spending much time, the hunters were at last obliged to confess that all attempts to dislodge the wary animal were useless. So as the case was hopeless they reluctantly desisted from all further efforts. Sunset, too, was drawing on, and as they had yet a considerable distance to traverse ere they could satisfy Mackenzie's great craving for "mug," they all prepared to descend the hill.

But before doing so, Norman, who had a keen eye for the picturesque, called the attention of his companions to the wild but somewhat monotonous character of the scenery, which their elevated position gave them good means of viewing to advantage.

Looking in the direction they were about to ride

—towards the most distant range of hills, which were, at the same time, the highest—it appeared as if the whole country was one wide wilderness of jungle ; except where, in various places, rose from amidst it the broken, irregular summits of the hills, or massive boulders, and bare cliffs and rocky gorges presented themselves. The prevailing colour of the underwood was a dusky brown ; but this was enlivened by groups of bright-green korinda bushes ; and the more brilliant foliage of the trees, massed in pleasant relief in the dells and valleys, also afforded a contrast with the arid hue of the jungle, and one on which the eye delighted to dwell.

The most distant hills were indistinct, and the outline subdued and softened under the glow of the declining sun, which shed a yellow haze upon them. The grey, steamy mists, and occasional volumes of smoke from burnt jungle, too, were rising from the valleys, and lent their influence to obscure the distance. The villages, but few in number, lay hidden among the sinuosities of the hills ; so that nature seemed to reign supreme in one of its wildest and most desolate aspects.

But as the hour admitted no very lengthened contemplation of the scenery, the hunters were soon *en route* to the spot where their ponies had been left.

Manajee was there gratified with a liberal reward, and the beaters were paid, and, with the exception of those required to carry the guns, dismissed to their homes. But before the shikaree left, he promised to inform the gentlemen directly any tigers reappeared in his part of the country. And good pay and good treatment combined to render him perfectly sincere in his promise. As the parties separated, each to pursue its own path, Manajee was heard to give utterance to his usual vaunt.

The path to the camp lay almost entirely through jungle; and it was not till they reached the vicinity of the village that any artificially-cleared space of land presented itself. It was some time after nightfall before they arrived, glad enough to dismount; for that jog-jog, at a shuffling walking pace, for many miles, through thick underwood, after a hard, hot day's work in the sun, is as tedious as fatiguing. Fortunately here also was a small river, or rather nullah, which after winding amongst the hills, slightly expanded. A plunge into a neighbouring pool, though in the dark, refreshed the wearied sportsmen; and they sat down to dinner with a very keen appreciation of the intrinsic merits of that grateful compound, "mug."

Rugonauth's report was generally favourable. Two or three tigers, he said, were about, but wan-

dering and difficult to mark down. He pronounced it, however, to be a capital bear country ; and on the whole, thought they should remain there for two or three days.

Old Sheik Hussein averred that the country must be swarming with wild beasts of every description.

"They were roaring all the night, Sahib, as we came along," he said. "If we had not had torches with us, I will eat an oath that they would have attacked us. Norman Sahib's boy, Baloo, declared to me, he saw tigers and panthers and bears constantly. Praise to Allah and Mahomed his prophet, that we all escaped!"

"That young imp has been frightening the old fellow all along the march, I bet anything," said Sheik Hussein's master, as the worthy servant left the tent. "Didn't he, Manuel?"

"Yes, sar," replied Hawkes' Indo-Portuguese servant, who understood English, and had evidently enjoyed the joke. "He very much fright Mr. Sheik Hussein. He tell him many time that one big tiger be in the bushes all ready for to jomp. Mr. Butler very much him shake, and get off tattoo, and get on back one camel. He no likee shikar trip, he say."

"Well, Manuel," said Hawkes ; "but weren't you afraid? I suppose there are wild beasts about."

"Yes, sar. In the jungles, jungly creatures live. But I not fear. If master please, then I go out shooting with him. My master, before I come in Sahib's service, great shikaree, and sometimes lend gun."

"Well done, Manuel," exclaimed Norman. "You are breaking out in a new light. Did you ever see a tiger killed?"

"I no see tiger kill, Sahib. But I shoot plenty much ducks and eshnaffs and teturs and leetly pijuns. If master order, that time I shoot peacock for dinner. I see two, three, twenty this morning. Baloo nearly kill one with stone.'

"Do you mean to say, Manuel,' asked that redoubtable person's master, that you ever shot a snipe?" (for by eshnaff Mr. Manuel intended to signify that bird.) "If you can shoot a flying snipe you must be a good shot."

"He no fly, sar. I wait; then see three, four, running in water, and make good shot. Two kill him."

"Snipes or sandpipers. All's fish that comes to your net. Eh, Manuel?"

"Master please make fun No shoot fish. Real eshnaffs; leetly birds with long mouths."

"What, running in the open water?"

"Yes, sar, in the thin water. They no swim,

where plenty much water, like the duck; but run along near shore."

"By no means an unusual circumstance in the open shallows," said Norman. "In reeds and rushes, of course, they are seldom seen till flushed; but here, in India, we often detect them running when feeding away from cover. But what do you think of snipe sitting in bushes?"

"Well, I know partridges roost in trees sometimes in this country. But draw it mild, Norman. Remember a snipe is a wading bird."

"Yet, strange as it may appear, I have actually seen them sitting in a bush, not a tree."

"How could they hang on?" was the natural inquiry.

"I'll tell you how it happened," said Norman. "At a tank, a favourite shooting-place of mine, in Cutch—Mac knows it well—Rhoda! Eh, Mac?" An affirmative nod and grunt from the person appealed to, replied to this interrogation, and the speaker continued—"I was out there once early in the season. The rains had been heavy, and the water had inundated the land adjacent on one side, which was very flat. Several bushes grew about, and many of these were now right out in the water, far from land. I had beaten a small patch of rushes and grass at the margin, killing a snipe or two, and

stopped to mark down one that I had flushed when loading. To my astonishment, I saw it settle in one of these bushes far out in the water, with not a weed or blade of grass about it. I waded in after it, and, when pretty close, looking attentively at the bush to try and discover my friend, I detected, against the light back-ground of water, not only the bird I was seeking, but three or four companions squatted close together. As the water had subsided from its highest elevation, the scum, particles of dead grass, bits of stick, and other small things floating on the surface, had been washed against the branches of the bush and adhered to it, and formed little nests, now high above the water. It was one of these deposits on which the snipe were squatted. It would have been a fine pot for Manuel, as they were close together; but of course I gave them a fair chance, and turned them up; with what effect I don't remember."

"Ah! that sounds all right now," Hawkes said. "But you must confess, to hear of snipe sitting in trees or bushes, is likely to excite incredulity. Why, even the man, you recollect, couldn't induce his friends to believe that partridges roosted in trees in India."

"How was that?" asked Mackenzie.

"It's as old as the hills," answered Hawkes. "Do you mean to say you never heard the story?"

"No; not that I remember. Let us have it," was the reply.

"Well. At a dinner party in London, some Indian officer—I forget who—happened to mention that partridges roosted in trees; and, observing the incredulity of his auditors, appealed to an Indian friend at the same table. The friend positively denied all knowledge of such a circumstance; which, of course, only added to the disbelief of the party, who put it down as a regular 'Traveller's tale.' The officer who had related the fact was naturally annoyed at his word being doubted; and especially angry with his friend who, he was aware, was as cognisant as himself of the truth of his statement. Consequently, he took him to task afterwards. 'My dear fellow,' was the satisfactory reply he received to his remonstrances, 'I know it is perfectly true; but not a man round the table believed you; and do you think I was such a fool as to place myself in the same predicament? They looked upon you already as effective at the long-bow; in fact, not to mince matters, as a liar; and would have considered me a *damned* liar."

"Ay, travellers and sportsmen have to be particular," said Mackenzie, reflectively. "It's so easy

for a man, a mere book-worm, to sit down at his desk, and take a traveller's book to pieces. A few discrepancies and mistakes are easily found. They don't think, by Jove, of the time and work it has taken to accumulate the materials for the book. I know, Norman, you always keep a sort of journal on your shikar trips. Perhaps, some fine day, you may wish to enlighten the world as to your adventures. If you ever do so, I recommend you to bear Hawkes' story in mind.

CHAPTER VII.

Sunday in the Jungles—The new Camp—An escape from a Cobra —Snakes—Poison—Mad dogs—Anecdotes of both.

THE next day was Sunday. Intimation was accordingly given to the shikarees and people, that the gentlemen would on that day take a rest; and, therefore, it was not necessary for the trackers and markers to go out in the morning.

Had a tiger been actually marked down, or had any report reached the sportsmen of a bullock fresh killed, I will not affirm that they would not have immediately sallied forth. A tiger is not a beast to have salt thrown on his tail. Here to-day, he is miles away to-morrow; and an opportunity of meeting him, once lost, may not again occur. But, imbued with the lessons of their childhood, they were unwilling voluntarily to disturb the sanctity of the day by any active initiatory efforts of their own.

But though, in this respect, they adhered to traditionary custom, advantage was taken of the long day of leisure to polish up the guns, give them a slight oiling, cast bullets, cut patches, and make all

the petty repairs necessary. It may be that the day did not pass away without some quiet thought and reading; but no one of them paraded his reflections, or considered it necessary to obtrude them on his companions.

The tents were pitched under a magnificent peepul, sufficiently wide-spreading and umbrageous to give shelter to the servants' tents, as well as their own; and the small canvas dwellings looked dwarfed, under the huge limbs and against the downward shoots and vast trunk of the noble tree. It stood in solitary majesty on a rising ground in a little hill-encircled valley, which was cleared and cultivated. The nullah, a couple of hundred yards away, washed the base of a range of hills, and followed their contour. It was in the upper parts of this nullah, where it clove its way through the hills and was fed by the numerous ravines which seamed them, that tigers were looked for. All the neighbouring hills were reported to be the resort of bears; and samber and cheetul were also obtainable in places, especially, it was said, down the valley. The horses were picketed under a smaller tree, and the camels were sent to the vicinity of the village, a third of a mile off. Towards evening the three friends took a walk, and ascended one of the nearest eminences, with the object of obtaining a partial view

of the surrounding country, and getting some general idea of its aspect. Leisurely they strolled along, and several times rested, partly in mere indolence, partly to contemplate the different views, or throw a stone at a pea-fowl as it ran off into the thicker underwood. On the whole they considered the features of the country presented an appearance decidedly gamey.

In returning towards the pool in which they intended to take their evening swim, Mackenzie had out-paced his companions, and was walking some distance ahead of them. Suddenly they saw him stop and commence stamping hard with one foot, at the same time calling to them hurriedly.

They ran up to him; and Norman, who had a stick in his hand, was preparing to attack a large black cobra, which was twisted round Mackenzie's left leg, when the latter exclaimed, "Never mind. It's all right; he's dead. Lucky I didn't tread on him further back." And, as he spoke, he raised his right heel and showed the snake's head, quite crushed, beneath it.

"Are you sure you are not touched?" they anxiously inquired. "How was it?"

"Unwind him, and I'll tell you. It was a near shave."

Having uncoiled the venomous creature, which,

though dead, still retained Mackenzie's leg in its folds, he said, "I was walking quietly along, thinking how jolly a swim would be, when suddenly I felt something writhe under my foot, and in a second the brute had twisted itself round my leg. My first impulse was to lift my foot, and I believe I actually did so for a single second, but, luckily, saw that its head was fixed. I had trodden on the snake just about an inch or two behind the head, so that it could not get at me to strike. Of course, I pressed my foot down harder still, and brought my right heel as hard as I could on its head, and crushed it as you see."

"Lucky, indeed, old fellow, you had presence of mind to do so," said Norman, heartily. "You could hardly have raised your foot. If you had done so, you must have been bitten."

"I am sure I should have thought of nothing but kicking out, or running off," Hawkes observed. "I funk snakes and mad dogs more than any other earthly creatures, and should most assuredly have acted on my first impulse to bolt."

"Those ponderous limbs and heavy shooting-shoes did you good service, Mac," Norman said. "Even supposing I had been free from Hawkes' desire to cut away, which I much doubt, the brute would probably have writhed itself away from beneath

my light weight, and then my thin shoes would scarcely have been hard enough to crush his head. So, Mac, old boy,"—and Norman gave his friend a hearty smack on the shoulder,—"you ought to be very grateful that the danger befell you, and not either Hawkes or myself."

"That's one way of putting it, certainly," laughed the good-natured fellow; "and now it's over, I don't mind."

The circumstance led that evening to a conversation on the subject of snakes, and the many narrow escapes men had from them.

The two seniors had several incidents to relate; and even young Hawkes was not without his experience of the reptile so inimical to the race of man.

"It is wonderful how comparatively few get bitten," said Mackenzie. "Considering the number of venomous snakes that are to be found in some parts, and that the natives' legs and feet are generally undefended, it seems marvellous that so few should suffer."

"In Scinde and some other districts, the list of deaths from snake-bites is anything but scanty," Norman replied.

"And they do not go out of the way to attack, do they?" inquired Hawkes.

"No. They will nearly always avoid man if possible. The danger is, when one comes upon them unexpectedly, or when they are asleep, and they have no time to get out of the way. Mac, I imagine, must have done so to-day. I doubt if they ever attack man in pure unreasoning anger."

"I don't know that," said Mac. "It is said the female, with eggs or young, will do so. I once saw a cobra dart out of a bush at a man, miss him, and wriggle back again. It is true he was beating, or—if I remember right—just going to beat, the bush for a quail, which had flown into the grass at its roots, and was yet a little distant from it. The snake seemed to come out of his way to attack, instead of slipping quietly off."

"At certain seasons they do appear more irritable than at others," Norman remarked. "But speaking of narrow escapes, I can recall to mind four different occasions when snakes have wriggled from between my legs, or I have stepped over them. Twice it was dusk, and each time a whip-snake, I believe, glided away as if from my very feet. A hiss from the creature, immediately behind me in the grass, was the first intimation I had of having stept over one once, while out shooting."

"I have not yet experienced them so close to my

legs," said Hawkes; "but too near my hand to be pleasant. I went into my bath-room one day, and was on the point of dipping a mug into one of the earthen chatty-pots for some water, when a snake's head bobbed up from within it. I started back, and the head disappeared. I then got hold of a towel and threw it over the mouth of the chatty; the head again bobbed up against the towel as I hit the pot with a short stick I seized. This happened two or three times, like a Jack-in-the-box. At last I managed to land a good whack on the side of the head, and finished it."

"Only the other day, in my bungalow at Jehangeerpore," said Mackenzie, "I went into the verandah to get a bottle of soda-water, which was cooling there under a wet cloth. I raised the cloth, and was just about to seize the bottle, which was lying along with some others, when I espied a carpet-snake comfortably nestled under it, and evidently enjoying its cool retreat. I withdrew my hand sharp, without the snake moving; and there it remained till I got hold of a stick and polished it off."

"I have read somewhere," Hawkes said, "that only a small proportion of snakes are venomous."

"I don't know how they are classed; but the natives generally make out every species to be more

or less venomous, with few exceptions. They don't include, however, rock-snakes, which are, I believe, of the boa kind. I suppose they like to exaggerate the terrors of the beasts."

"The black cobra is the worst;—the most deadly, I mean, is it not?" asked Hawkes.

"It is generally thought so. But there is a small snake in Scinde called, I think, the "kuppur," which is said to cause death much more quickly. I have even heard it reported that it attacks and destroys the cobra. Many deaths among the natives are attributed to it."

"Yes," remarked Mackenzie; "and I daresay sometimes with but little foundation. Where poison is so easily procured, I imagine the snakes sometimes get the credit of the deeds performed by more human means. I have seen one case of tolerable wholesale poisoning in my time; though certainly not in this instance attributed to other cause than that of the agency of man. You remember, Norman, that case at Sukkur."

"Well," was the reply. "It was about as horrible a one as I can recollect."

In reply to Hawkes' inquiries, Mackenzie related that a family consisting of fourteen persons, of all ages and both sexes, had been, with two exceptions, destroyed by the administration of poison.

The substance of his story was as follows:—The family had been employed at a distance from their homes during the harvest season, and were on their return, with the few rupees they had been able to save out of their scanty earnings. The only two of the party who escaped were an old woman and a child in arms, and but little could be extracted from the former. A fukeer had joined them at some part of their journey, and it is supposed that he mixed the poison with their food; but whether from recent ill-will, or on account of any ancient grudge, or from motives of revenge, or for the mere sake of the paltry sum of money which they carried, did not appear. The old woman seemed unable to give any coherent account of the transaction. She had escaped in consequence of sickness having prevented her from being a partaker of the meal on that day; and the child in arms, of course, was provided for otherwise. The rest were brought into the hospital at Sukkur, in Scinde—one or two yet living—and it was a horrible sight to see them, for all must have died in great agony. The clenched hands, full of earth and grass, and the faces, showed this.

"And was it never found out who did it?" asked Hawkes.

"I believe not," Mackenzie replied; "at least while I was there. The fukeer had disappeared,

and there seemed no reason to suspect anyone else. Natives will commit the most awful crimes for the sake of a rupee or two. They really seem to regard life as an article of but the very smallest value."

"But to return to our sheep, or rather snakes," said Hawkes. "I suppose you two have shot numbers?"

"Why, yes. A man cannot knock about the country much without doing a little in that line," answered Norman. "I remember cutting a cobra in two. He passed just in front, without taking any notice of me. I fired into him, and he was so close that the charge had hardly spread, and cut him clean in two. On another occasion I gave chase to a cobra close to the servants' outhouses, got a snap-shot in a hedge, and cut several inches off the creature's tail; this I picked up, but the principal portion of the snake managed to escape."

"Now, Hawkes," observed Mackenzie, "I think you have done pretty well in the snake line. Perhaps you would like a little of your other special aversion, 'mad dogs.'"

"Yes," exclaimed Hawkes, eagerly; "I should. Tell me, did you ever see any one die of hydrophobia?"

"Only one, and that was a poor native boy who was brought to our camp on one occasion, when I

was travelling with a large party with whom was a doctor. The lad had been bitten some months before by one of the village curs. The disease showed itself, I think, only the day before our arrival, and he died in an hour or two after he was brought to us."

"Was he violent?" Hawkes inquired.

"No, quite passive. He made no attempt to bite his relatives, who supported him in their arms and frequently wiped away the saliva from his mouth. The spasmodic twitching was very painful to witness. That, and the foam at the mouth, were the only symptoms I observed. There was no barking, such as is popularly supposed to be the case. The lad seemed to suffer frightfully, but showed no inclination to be violent."

"Did you ever know of any Englishman bitten in India?"

"Yes; several officers have died from hydrophobia since I entered the service. One poor fellow, I remember hearing, was bitten by a favourite dog when he was playing at quoits. His friend at once heated the pointed iron spud and cauterised the wound; but it was of no use on that occasion, as the man died two or three weeks afterwards. But I have known several men bitten without suffering. One was said to have been bitten twice; first by a

mad jackal which ran into his house, and another time by a dog, and yet he is alive to this day. He was an awfully fat fellow; perhaps that had something to do with the immunity he enjoyed."

"Gad! if I thought that," said Hawkes, laughingly, "I should cultivate obesity at once, as an armour of proof. One wouldn't mind the inconvenience of an external layer of fat, if it acted as a preserver from madness. But do you fancy all dogs which get the credit of it are mad?"

"No, decidedly not," was the reply. "But besides that, some veterinary surgeons consider that only a small proportion of those bitten by rabid dogs go mad and die. I forget the proportion; on that, however, I believe there is much difference of opinion."

"I have had to shoot two dogs of my own," said Norman, "from both of which, if they were really mad, I had narrow escapes. But I am very doubtful about their being so. I was one day playing with one of them, not having observed any symptoms of madness, and at the time had my hand actually in the little beast's mouth, when she—for it was a terrier bitch—left me, and, without any apparent cause, ran at the tailor, who chanced just then to come into my room, and bit him. He was working in the house, and she knew him quite well. How-

ever, my servants soon after ran in to say that she had been seen tearing along the road snapping at everything that came in her way, a goat among others having, I remember, been bitten. The poor little beast showed no symptoms of hydrophobia that I could discern, except redness of the eyes; but by the advice of friends I had it destroyed to prevent further accidents. Another bitch of the same litter I was also obliged to have shot. My people told me they thought it was going mad, so I had it chained up. Before long it commenced howling in a peculiar manner. Two of my brother officers came to look at it; but as I still thought it was under the influence of some other disease than madness, I approached to pat it, with the object of showing its quietness. I was just about to do so, when it sprang at my arm and attempted to snap. I was fortunately just out of reach, and didn't trust myself within length of its chain again. Of course I was obliged to admit that, mad or not, the animal was in a dangerous state. So one of my friends got out my gun, and put an end to any further risk on the part of myself or others."

"But isn't a horror of water a sure sign?" demanded Hawkes.

"Yes," was the reply, "when exhibited; but

at some stages of the disease excessive thirst is common, and is, I believe, considered by skilled vets. a premonitory symptom. Unusually great fondness for the master, I have also heard described as another sign; but these naturally escape one unless on the look-out for them."

"Very likely here in India there are some irritable diseases which pass for hydrophobia," Mackenzie said. "But after all it is better to be on the safe side, and destroy the dog where there is any suspicion. The chance of saving a dog's life hardly balances the risk of a man being bitten. When skilled advice can be obtained, and the animal is well secured, of course it is different."

"Have you ever had any narrow escapes, Mac?" asked Hawkes, after a pause.

"Why, yes. One can hardly be many years in India without, at some time or other, having some incidents to relate. I remember once bayoneting a mad dog. Norman was with me. The beast came into my verandah. I seized a musket and bayonet which happened to be resting against the wall, charged the beast, and pinned it against the ground. Norman got hold of a stick, and whacked it about the head while I held it, and so we polished it off. But I once had a really narrow escape. I was lying in bed one morning, when a mad pariah

dog rushed in at the open door, through my room, and, without noticing me, dashed into the bath-room, where it threw itself down panting, and with the tongue lolling out. I jumped out of bed and darted at the bath-room door. I was only just in time; for the beast turned round, saw me, jumped up, and made in my direction. I just managed, however, to close the door in its face. Of course I soon had my gun loaded, broke a pane from the outside in the bath-room window, and shot the brute. Now, Hawkes, if you are not inclined for roost, I am; so I hope you are contented for to-night."

CHAPTER VIII.

Trying weather and trying work—A smoked-out Bear—Saved from a Charge—Activity of hill men—In pursuit—The last Charge—The Death.

No tigers were marked down on Monday; but a huge bear was reported to have taken up his quarters in a patch of jungle in a nullah near one of the highest peaks of the surrounding hills, and distant three or four miles. The first part of the way lay up a neighbouring narrow valley; and the road, as long as it continued there, was practicable for the horses. But when less than half the distance had been traversed, the sportsmen were obliged to dismount, and, leaving their steeds, perform the rest on foot.

The last two or three days had been intensely hot, with but little wind stirring; so that in the ravines, and amidst the thick jungle, where there was no free circulation, the atmosphere was stifling. The path was steep and rugged, and those who know what a rough climb is on a hot summer day in India, will readily understand that the hunters had, more than once, to throw themselves on the ground and

endeavour to recover breath and strength. Even the hot sirocco would have been preferable to no movement of the air. Its evaporating effect on the perspiring body cools and refreshes; though rash exposure to its desiccating influence when resting is to be guarded against, as fever and rheumatism may be the consequence. But on this day there was none of it; and the lurid oppressive atmosphere rendered climbing the hills additionally trying. The hunters were not sorry, therefore, when, after a couple of hours' severe, exhausting toil, they reached a shoulder of the hill near bruin's resting-place. A little coolish air here just gently fanned their bared heads, as they rested under a tree for the purpose of regaining wind and nerve, and having a little weak brandy-and-water.

Thus refreshed, they examined the place; and, as usual, took up their respective positions by lot. Norman was stationed on the hill-side, above the thickly-wooded, winding dell into which the game had been viewed. From the spot he selected, he covered one or two paths where the jungle was somewhat thinner, and was altogether the best situation for commanding that flank. Mackenzie was opposite to him on a swell of the hill a little lower down, and between them the thicket was at its greatest width. Hawkes held guard on the same

side as Mackenzie, still lower down, and covered the nullah which gave exit from the dell to the slopes below, and which acted as a drainer to the rough hill side.

The beaters commenced above, and passed down between Mackenzie and Norman towards Hawkes, without anything making its appearance, though the beast was said by some to be on foot. They reached Hawkes' position, and still no one could say he had actually seen the animal. Suddenly, however, there was a shout that the bear was moving far in the rear of the line of beaters, and somewhere between Mackenzie and Norman. Hawkes now rushed along the outside of the jungle and joined his neighbour; and the two descended into the nullah which threaded the centre of the cover. Mackenzie here caught a momentary glimpse of the bear just below Norman, and fired a snap shot at it. This was responded to by a deep growl, which seemed to Norman to proceed from a part of the thicket quite close; but he could see nothing of the beast which had emitted it. He changed his place, but was still unable to get a view. A few lighted rockets were now thrown into the jungle, as the beast was evidently sulky and would not break; and they set fire to a quantity of rank dry grass and brushwood. After crackling for about a quarter

of an hour the flames began to leap about, and Norman was driven from his position by the density of the smoke which rolled up towards him. Bruin's retreat now became too hot to be tenable, for, with a grunting sort of growl, he broke down the nullah not twenty yards from Mackenzie and Hawkes, both of whom had returned to the edge of the cover, and were watching the progress and effect of the fire. Though so close, neither of them caught even a momentary glimpse of the bear, who was soon after tally-ho'd as breaking down the hill by some of the look-outs on the surrounding eminences. In a wonderfully short time, considering the ungainly pace of the animal, the bear had placed a mile between himself and the hunters, but the scouts had held him in view nearly all the way, and now declared he had entered a thick cover in the bed of another nullah. Thither, accordingly, the sportsmen proceeded as quickly as possible.

They were hesitating what next to do after reaching the place, and Rugonauth, with some men on the opposite side, was endeavouring to ascertain the whereabouts of the game; when repeated growls a little below the hunters gave indubitable signs that the bear was yet there. Mackenzie ran forward along the path they stood on, and which

wound round the side of the hill, the other two remaining where they were. Presently a cry was raised that a man was seized, and the two were on the point of rushing down into the nullah to his assistance, when, for a single second, they caught sight of the bear slipping down into the bottom of the nullah, after making a charge at the men on the other side.

"Stand where you are, Sahibs!" shouted Rugonauth. "The man is all safe. He threw his cumley (coarse native cloth or blanket, serving as a wrapper) in the bear's face."

"Was he seized?" asked Norman, in reply.

"No, Sahib. The bear came at our bodies, but the cumley stopped him. He has torn it to pieces. Look out! Take care! There he goes, straight at you."

As Rugonauth spoke, the bear broke from the thick jungle within ten or a dozen yards of the spot where the friends were standing, and charged, growling viciously, right at them. Hawkes, in taking a step back, tripped and fell, but managed to fire from a sitting posture. A couple of bullets from Norman also staggered and turned the beast, but without dropping him. He went away to the left before the spare guns could be got hold of, for the men had retreated.

"Keep lower down, Mac, and you may get a shot," shouted Norman.

Mac did as directed, and managed to get a long running shot; but the bear still kept on his way.

It was next seen rounding a spur of the hill, some distance off. They were on the point of following as quickly as they could, with their second guns, when a little man ran up to them, uttered the single word, "water," and, pointing in a direction to the flank and front of the bear, proceeded to constitute himself their guide.

Without any unnecessary expenditure of words, they at once adopted the implied suggestion, and followed the man. He conducted them, as fast as they could go, to a pool of water, but not in time to intercept the bear, who they found had reached the place, gone through the water, and passed on, having probably refreshed himself with a drink. They, however, pushed on in his track, and got a sight of him as he was making over the spur of the hill. A snap shot or two, at a distance of about a hundred and fifty yards, only seemed to accelerate his movements; and he shortly made good his object, crossed the ridge, and was soon making rapid way down the hill on the other side.

The active little hill-men were skipping about from height to height, intent on keeping the beast

in sight, and, at the same time, shouting a running fire of observations one to the other. Directions, too, both by voice and gesture, were frequently given to the gun-bearers and others with the hunters, who communicated to the latter the purport of the shouts and telegraphic signals.

Mackenzie now joined the other two, and all proceeded more leisurely in the track of the bear. By the time they had reached the top of the spur, the bear was said to have entered a thickly-wooded ravine far down the slope.

"How those little hill-fellows scuttle along!" said Mackenzie, as they topped the ridge, and took a minute or two's rest. "Why, hanged! if some of them are not already established on commanding points near the ravine!"

"Yes," answered Norman, "they are certainly first-rate hands at marking. It is wonderful how they manage to trace the beast's line by catching occasional glimpses of it. They seem to communicate one to the other who has last seen it, and where, and so they combine their sight from different points."

"I wish to goodness I had their wind and condition!" sighed the stalwart and somewhat fleshy Scotchman, as he mopped away at his face. "This is killing work!"

"Yes, by Jove! it takes it out of one!" agreed Hawkes. "My mouth is as dry as dust. I can't go any further without a drink."

"Take this bit of sugar-candy," said Norman, offering him a small piece of that sweet. "Better not drink till positively obliged. The more one takes, the more one requires; and we shall have a good stride yet before we reach that ravine."

Norman was, however, over-ruled, and, perhaps, not unwillingly so; for he followed their example, and took a long pull at the chogul of water which was now brought up.

Rugonauth, also, now joined them, and urged an immediate advance.

"Oh, Lord!" said Mackenzie, as he prepared to act on the shikaree's advice, "I feel as if I was melting! What a thundering hot day it is! I hope the bear will have the grace to be killed comfortably and quietly when next we see him, without any more bother."

"Well, *en avant, mes braves!* we must lose no time," said Norman, who was a trifle fresher than the others; and again they moved on, crossing several spurs and many nullahs before they reached the place they were making for.

It was some little time before a sufficient number of men to beat could be collected; and ere the line,

or rather the parties—for they were ordered not to go singly—could be arranged, the bear was again on the move. Norman saw it in the jungle, and fired a long shot in the vain hope of endeavouring to make it break towards Hawkes; but it sneaked away below him, and gave no chance. Some of the men next viewed it as it turned into a nullah which fed the ravine, and make up it as if with the intention of crossing another ridge.

This gave Mackenzie a chance of intercepting it, as he had taken up a position on the other side of the ravine to that occupied by Norman and Hawkes.

The hard work had told on all, Mackenzie especially, but still he persevered, while the others rested where they were till they could hear something certain of the beast's new line.

Mackenzie managed to get some way up the hill, and, as he thought, considerably above the game. He then sat down, while some of the shikarees endeavoured to ascertain the present position of the bear.

He was seated on a rock enjoying his rest, and by chance took up a stone and tossed it into a little clump of bushes lower down the hill-side, in front of him. To his astonishment, out dashed

the bear, and before he could get hold of his gun, which was lying behind him, had got some distance away. He, however, then delivered a broadside with telling effect, though at longish range, and seizing his second gun, ran by a short cut to a place he thought the beast would pass under.

The bear was closer than he expected; for, as he came up to the spot, it charged at him from a distance of only a few paces on his right. Turning round to meet it, he fired his gun before it reached his shoulder, and fortunately dropped the bear with a bullet in its mouth. A final pill was soon administered, and this finished him.

On hearing the first shots, Norman and Hawkes had made a fresh start; but the death-shout proclaimed that the game had at last succumbed, after a running fight of five or six hours.

The sun was just sinking as this desirable result was attained; and the tired sportsmen had still a rough, weary trudge of some four miles before them —happily, however, nearly all down-hill—ere they could reach their tents. The whole of it was necessarily performed on foot, as the changes and vicissitudes of the chase had led them into a part of the country far away from the place where the horses had been left.

Through the rapidly deepening gloom of the brief tropical twilight, the hunters stumbled over the numerous obstacles which strewed the wild jungle path; and Hawkes, more than once, imagined that a snake wriggled away in front. Camp was, however, reached at last; and at dinner something more than the usual allowance of "mug" was consumed. The meal over, and a single cheroot smoked, they all turned in.

CHAPTER IX.

A Banquet for the fowls of the air—Preparations for a storm—The storm—Its results.

THE hunters were too much done up to attempt a hunt at any distance on the following day, even had the shikarees been able to mark anything down. But the latter were just as much fatigued, and equally incapable of going out in the morning.

Mackenzie's feet were greatly swollen and blistered, and remained so for some days. His lighter companions, however, escaped this effect of their unusual exertions, but were nevertheless glad of a day's rest. This enabled Hawkes to superintend personally, to his exceeding satisfaction, the collection of all the fat after the skin of the bear had been removed.

It proved to be a particularly large and heavy male, and yielded a fine supply of grease. It was only brought into camp in the course of the morning, when it was found that, out of nearly double the number of bullets fired from first to last of the engagement, nine had taken effect in various parts of the body.

So careful was Hawkes in collecting every scrap of fat, that but little was left to anoint the strips and lumps of riven flesh over which a flock of vultures were shortly screaming and fighting and flapping their broad wings. They appeared directly after the carcase was removed to a distance from the camp, and were soon engaged in banqueting noisily over it. Kites, too, assisted at the revels, and added to the noise with their shrill cries. A pair or two of ravens also, and a number of crows strutted about close at hand, not daring to compete with the more powerful birds in their struggle for food, but making up for their lack of strength by their audacity and quickness. Hovering continually around, by occasional little rapid dashes, one would manage frequently to seize a piece of flesh and escape with it, followed by numbers of his own kind. Long ere nightfall, many of the vultures were sitting gorged and in lazy contemplation on the neighbouring trees. The bones of the bear were scattered about, but on them was not left enough to afford a meal to one of the hungry troop of jackalls, who at dusk came howling round the place in expectation of supper.

Day had, on this occasion, given the advantage to the feathered race. Whence the vultures had come, or whither they went after digesting their

food, was a problem the hunters were unable to solve.

The heat continued intense. The previous night had been most close and oppressive; and even the toil-worn hunters could not sleep for any continued length of time without having recourse to the water chogul.

But as the day advanced, the breathless state of the atmosphere, and the pile of clouds gathering behind the hills, warned the experienced of the party to make preparations to receive a storm of rain or dust, perhaps both; but in either case, most certainly accompanied by a hurricane of wind.

Not unfrequently have the lax, or lazy, or inexperienced, to rue the neglect of those precautions, which should ever precede the arrival of the expected storm. It is too late when once it has burst. Tents blown down, poles smashed, stores destroyed and numerous other inconveniences may result from a want of due preparation. Of course no amount of foresight will at all times prove sufficient to avoid those disasters; but it is usually the careless who suffer.

The signs of the weather were not lost on the hunters, who summoned all hands to make the necessary preparations to enable them to meet, with the minimum of risk, one of those wild and angry,

but usually brief fits of the elements, such as occasionally occur during the hot season in the interior of India.

Early in the afternoon, and while the vultures were yet busily employed in completing their banquet, the camp was alive with the movements of all its inhabitants, and several outsiders from the village. The tent-pegs to leeward were driven deep into the ground; all those towards the quarter from which the storm was expected, and those at all the corners, were *bushed*. A bough of a tree or bush was cut and embedded in the soil, the thick end only appearing above it, thus affording a securer hold to the rope than that afforded by the peg alone, which becomes loosened when the earth is first saturated. Advantage was taken also of such depending branches, the shoots from the parent tree's limbs, as had struck root. Little trenches were cut just outside the base of the tent-walls all round, and the débris heaped against them; thus forming a small embankment to prevent the entrance underneath of either wind or water. A deeper and larger cut was made towards the lower ground, so as to carry off the accumulation of water in the trenches. The boxes inside the tents were already raised on stones to prevent the inroads of that pest of India, the white ant; but larger stones were now

procured and placed under them, so that in the event of any irruption of water they should be secure. All small articles were stowed away, and everything, as far as possible, got under cover. The guns were carefully put to bed as the safest place, and there covered up. The horses were secured in the most sheltered position ; and saddles and bridles, till now hanging on the branches of the trees, taken into the tents.

When all was made snug, and every device which occurred to them resorted to, the hunters sat quietly in the shade outside their tents, calmly awaiting, in the stagnant atmosphere, the approach of the storm, now slowly rolling up over the heavens.

For a long time its approach was perceptible, as dense clouds and columns of dust obscured, one by one, the more distant hill peaks. Range after range gradually sank invisible behind the lurid rolls and pillars which were surmounted by a dark indigo canopy. Onwards they came, streaks of lightning flashing above them, followed by the low rumbling of still distant thunder. A scorching hot puff or two, the first heralds or skirmishers of the storm, just stirred the lethargic leaves, then died away. Again they came hotter and with greater force, and the vegetation rustled louder under their influence. Soon the fitful gusts merged into one continued

sweep of wind; and, a few hundred yards distant, the trees could be seen bending low before the full fury of the blast. From tree to tree, its progress could be traced as each became lost in the murky atmosphere. Ere long, it rushed up to the little camp, laden with the heat of a furnace, and accompanied by dense clouds of dust and sand and minute particles of substances, which struck like pins against the unprotected face. It raged through the stubborn giant tree, with a violence which threatened to dismember it, for its grasp of the earth, both by its own massive roots, and those of its parasite shoots, rendered entire destruction unlikely. All around was quickly enveloped. Things a few yards distant could not be discerned, and the sun was so obscured as to render it difficult to decipher the characters of fair sized print. The first fierce gust settled into a steady hurricane, gradually becoming cooler as it rather increased than diminished in strength. A few heavy drops of rain fell, and the air became delightfully chill; and then in a few minutes the rolling dust gave place to a falling sheet of water, which pelted against all obstructions with tremendous violence.

The most vivid flashes of lightning followed each other in rapid succession, and were almost contemporaneous with sharp cracks of deafening thunder,

whose peals were heard far above the roaring of the wind, or the groaning and creaking of the trees. They appeared to issue from a height but little above the earth, so sudden and startling were the thunder volleys. Presently, there was a comparative pause, but only for a few seconds; for the elements, gaining strength by their momentary rest, burst out with renewed fury. A globe of fire seemed to fall within a short distance, and rush along the ground. This was instantaneously succeeded by a roar of thunder, which shook the earth. The power of the storm was redoubled, and the hurricane attained its greatest violence.

All three hunters were seated in Mackenzie's tent, which now gave symptoms of succumbing to the fury of the blast. One corner rope had given way, and as others threatened to do so, it became necessary to avert, if possible, the impending catastrophe of its downfall. By shouting into each other's ears, and making signals, the three, with some of the servants, managed to act in combination, and, securing the flapping rope, had it soon again fixed to a buried bush, and themselves clung on to the remaining ones.

The storm, having once attained its climax, subsided as quickly as it had arisen. The rain lessened, then the wind abated, and in less than an hour the

clouds had passed, the sky was blue overhead, and the leaves and grass were glittering with the raindrops, in the full glare of the tropical sun, while they danced in the breath of a cool and pleasant breeze.

The inmates of the little camp had now leisure to look around and ascertain the damage wrought by the brief elemental shock. One of the servants' rowties, it was found, had come down, and, with one of its poles broken, lay a confused mass of canvass, with boxes, baskets, and other articles sticking up like great bumps from beneath it. Two of the horses, also, had broken loose from their pickets, and, with heel-ropes dangling behind, were careering over the open ground, evincing a strong disposition to fight. One or two boughs of trees lay scattered about, and it was found the lightning had struck the root of a small isolated tree on a neighbouring rocky knoll, and, passing through it, furrowed the ground for a space of several yards before it became lost. A part of the embankment, which protected the tent of Norman and Hawkes, had given way, and a stream of water was flowing through it. Many things within the tents were, of course, more or less wetted; and there was shortly a great display of light clothing, blankets, horses' jules (clothing), and other articles stretched on the

neighbouring bushes or suspended from the branches of the trees. Soon, however, as all went to work with a will, damages were repaired. The horses were caught with the alluring assistance of the gram-bag, the broken pole spliced and the tent re-pitched, water ejected, and all made as snug and comfortable as under the circumstances could be managed.

Streams and nullahs were running in every direction; but these quickly diminished, and, ere long, ran entirely out, or subsided into mere trickling rills of water.

The cooling effect of the storm on the atmosphere almost repaid them, the hunters thought, for its inconveniences. How pleasant and fresh and invigorating the feeling of the air after the late relaxing heat! And they thoroughly enjoyed it, as they sat and compared notes; for not even the unsusceptible Mackenzie had been left entirely unimpressed with the dark beauty and grandeur and power of the elements in their wrath.

The river had risen considerably, and a good-sized stream was now flowing into the hitherto sluggish pool which had served them as a bathing-place.

As the sun approached the horizon, the pea-fowl, jungle-fowl, and other feathered denizens of the hills and woods, set up their many and oft-repeated cries

and notes. They all seemed as refreshed and invigorated as the trees and thickets which sheltered them, and woke up, making the jungle resound with their choruses of joy.

The hum of myriads of flying insects, too, and the bum of the earth and tree crickets arose as night fell.

When dinner was ready, and lights placed on the table, thousands of flying creatures, attracted by the glare, came trooping towards them, and hovered round. The cloth was soon covered with the wings discarded by the flying white ants and other insects. And when the table was moved outside, and the friends sat down to dinner, excessive caution was necessary, and much examination required, before each mouthful was committed to its destination. Covers, too, were obliged to be kept on the tumblers, to protect their contents from the inroads of creeping things.

This was the most unpleasant effect of the rain, and certainly was one of no mean magnitude. But the air was fresh, and the diners in good spirits, and the other two only laughed as either Mackenzie or Norman, both men of hair, like Esau, extracted some creeping animal from amidst the recesses of his whiskers, and—oh, horror!—proclaimed it to be a flying bug—a fact soon verified by olfactory evidence.

As each wore a light cap as a protective measure, the whiskerless Hawkes had, on the whole, rather the best of the joke.

In consequence of this nuisance, dinner was hurried over; and, sending away the lights, the hunters inhaled the fragrant manilla—a measure both pleasant and protective. As a treat after their ducking, Mackenzie ordered a bottle of mulled port.

The air was delightfully fresh—its dust-laden oppressiveness removed; and when, some time later, they sought their respective charpoys (beds), they luxuriated in a continuity of repose which the intense heat of the few preceding nights had rendered unobtainable.

CHAPTER X.

A Gosein's hut—No escape for Bruin—A long beat—Monkeys and Tigers—A critical position—A Spread Eagle shot—Its happy effects—Stewed-eel soup—An "Old Female."

WHILE they were yet at breakfast on the following morning, a man came in to say that a bear was marked down, and, luckily, at no great distance.

Mackenzie's feet were so blistered as not to admit of his wearing his usual heavy shooting-shoes. These were replaced by a pair of easy worsted-worked slippers, the manufacture and gift of some fair lady. The bear had fortunately condescended to take up his quarters in a place, the immediate neighbourhood of which was attainable on horseback. A fine group of trees, shadowing a welling spring, also gave shelter to the hut of a gosein, or Hindoo devotee, and the rudely-carved specimens of red-painted stones which did duty for gods.

The gosein was not so absorbed in holy contemplation, nor his mind so withdrawn from the current affairs of this lower world, as to be ignorant of the

arrival and presence of three white faces, or free from a certain itching to handle the current coin of the realm.

Most of the beaters, who addressed him as "Sahib," and stood in considerable awe of his sanctity and supernatural merits, were, nevertheless, not so dumbfounded by his presence as to prevent their asking and obtaining from him lights for their pipes. Though acceding to their requests, he hardly appeared to notice them, and treated them with a negligent air of superiority. But, as the gentlemen rode up, the instinct generated by a desire for the acquisition of rupees, and which he yet possessed in common with the inferior beings by whom he was surrounded, induced him to present his ash-covered body, and make obeisance, and an offer of his services. Indeed, they afterwards discovered that he had been of no little use in pointing out to the shikarees the usual haunts of the bear, which information had led to its being marked down.

It was a noble tope of trees at which they rested, far up one of the lateral glens of the hills. But here, again, the desire for seclusion, shade, and water, and not the picturesqueness of its position, had been the motive which urged him to select a pretty spot, from which a fine view was obtainable.

The sportsmen dismounted, and with Rugonauth held a brief council of war.

The bear was lying in a position not dissimilar to that of the last killed. A densely wooded nullah, from which, on one side, rose the face of the hill less thickly covered with jungle; on the other, a hill also, but more rugged and precipitous. This latter part it was not deemed necessary to occupy.

To Hawkes it fell to be stationed highest up. Norman came next; and Mackenzie was lowest down on the opposite side. He was stationed there, as the nullah narrowed and afforded a likely place whence to get a view of the beast, should he not break towards either of the other two, or escape past them unobserved.

The beaters commenced from above; and owing, probably, to the unusual coolness, at once disturbed the bear, who was seen by Hawkes advancing along a narrow path in his direction. He patiently waited, occasionally losing sight of it, till at last the beast appeared at a distance of not more than twenty yards, and Hawkes considered it time to fire. Before it could again become screened by the jungle, he was able to pour in a rapid broadside of four barrels, two of which rolled him over. As luck would have it, he only vacated the quarters he found so hot, to rush into others equally so: for,

breaking away from Hawkes, after a disappearance of a few minutes, he was detected by Norman listening, and evidently very sick, about forty yards off. Having a clear view, Norman fired, and knocked the beast off his legs. It lay for some time motionless, and Norman advanced towards it. But not yet did the tough-hided creature give in. The hunter's approach seemed to have a wonderfully revivifying effect, for again it rose, and struggled on into the thick jungle, receiving a couple more bullets as it departed. But all three hunters were destined on this occasion each to have a chance. From Norman, the dying bear crawled down into the nullah, and passed right under Mackenzie's position, and was there finally disposed of.

The whole affair did not occupy a quarter of an hour, and many were the congratulations on the brevity of the engagement, obviating, as it did, a renewal of the toils of the former day, to which Mackenzie, at any rate, was quite unequal.

On their return to the group of trees a consultation was held with Rugonauth, who brought to the notice of the hunters the able assistance rendered by the man of the ash-covered body and dishevelled locks, much to the gratification of that worthy individual, and a small addition to his pecuniary resources. He was profuse in his expression of

thanks, and volunteered much information regarding the immediate locality of his lonely dwelling.

It was yet so early that the hunters were unwilling to return to their tents, should there be a chance of obtaining anything by a beat on speculation; provided it could be made without any great demand on the physical exertions of Mackenzie, for the beaters had had little to do and were quite fresh.

"It must be in some place," said Mackenzie, when suggesting this to Rugonauth, "to the vicinity of which I can ride; for I am quite unable to go stumping about the rocks and stones, and over hills and nullahs."

"I know, Sahib," was the reply made by the shikaree, to whom the existence of such a thing as blistered feet was but vaguely known. "I heard the Sahib had got swelled feet, and therefore only examined the country this morning within an easy distance of the tents. There is a large ravine not far from this which I visited early this morning. I heard either a tiger or a panther roar there; but it was a long way off, and I could not make out which. I did not see it, so did not call the Sahibs there when I heard a bear was marked down. But if the gentlemen please, we can drive the ravine now."

"Where is it? Can I get there without climbing?" inquired Mackenzie.

"Sahib, its mouth is just round the shoulder of that hill," and Rugonauth pointed to one which sloped down to the valley about two miles off. "You might go up as far as you can, and take up a position. The upper part is the most likely; but if the Sahib can't go there he can't. Numun (so he pronounced it) Sahib and the Chota Sahib can go there."

It was soon arranged that Rugonauth should pilot the two latter on foot over the hill, and establish them in favourable places; while a couple of the village shikarees were deputed to convoy Mackenzie round it, with strict directions as to his lodgment. The beaters were ordered to proceed to the head of the ravine in question, also away up the hill, but in a direction diverging from that of the two hunters.

Mackenzie and the ponies of the others proceeded down the glen they had ascended, and turned the shoulder of the hill which the others crossed. The latter, after a somewhat weary climb and a brief descent on the other side, came to an extensive gorge which severed one spur of the mountain from another like a large Titan-inflicted gash. Its sides were rugged, in many parts quite precipitous, and

various water-courses—the drainers of the spurs on either flank—helped to swell the torrent which, during the monsoon, swept furiously down its rocky bed, and fed the river in the valley below. Indeed, it might be considered as its principal source.

The storm of the day before had left water lying in various parts, and a trickling rill still, here and there, found its way over and among the huge boulders with which its bottom was plentifully strewn, but hidden by the foliage, which was thick, and in some parts impervious.

"Why, Rugonauth," said Norman, as he inspected the place from the top of a cliff, "I am afraid the chances are much against our getting a beast to break favourably out of so extensive a place. There might be a dozen, and yet we not see one."

"True word, Sahib," was the reply. "But what is to be done? I have watched this place every morning, and have been unable to mark anything down in it. But there are several fresh pugs about, and perhaps a beast may show himself. The Sahib's luck is great. I have much faith in it. If it be destined that a tiger will eat your worship's bullets, he will do so."

"How do you intend to beat it?" asked Norman.

"I have sent one party of beaters to the top and

one to the other side. Most of the matchlockmen, with some blank powder, are with the latter. There are numbers of paths up the different nullahs which join the ravine, but only two or three that are much frequented, and they will fire continually at those places."

"And will they join the beaters as the line comes up with them?" inquired Hawkes.

"Sahib, I have ordered them, when the beaters in the ravine come near, to keep along the top of the cliffs and shout rather in front of them, so that a beast will be made to try and escape by this side. The two most likely places the Sahibs can occupy on this side."

"The plan seems good, Rugonauth," said Norman. "I hope it will be successful."

"What will be, will be," the old man oracularly observed. "With good fortune all will come right. In my thought something will be killed, and there will be more than one animal skinned at the tents to-night."

With this hopeful intimation the shikaree proceeded to station the two sportsmen. "Now, Sahib," he said, as he reached a point which commanded the gorge itself and a nullah which ran into it, "this is one place, and the other is there," and he pointed to another similar position a couple of

hundred yards further on. "If there is a tiger above this, he will very likely either come up one of these two nullahs, or sneak down the ravine itself. If neither of you should see him do that, then Mackenzie Sahib, who is nearly half a mile lower down, may have a chance. But my hope is the two nullahs."

Saying this, he left Norman where he was, and took Hawkes on to establish him in his assigned position. That effected, he moved on to take personal command of the beaters, and see that his directions were acted on.

The wary and self-reliant old shikaree, fatalist though he was, appeared himself so sanguine, that he impressed the two sportsmen with strong hopes, that, in spite of the adverse chances attending so extensive and speculative a beat, it might after all prove a successful one.

Before half-an-hour was past, distant shouts reverberated among the crags and rocks, and were bandied from side to side, announcing the commencement of the beat. Soon a blank shot or two was fired at intervals, and was caught up sharply by the echoes and repeated, with a progressive diminution of rattle and hardness, till lost in a soft, undefined murmur. The beating of the tom-tom occasionally swelled into a deeper cadence, as some

opening allowed its freer egress, or a favourable puff of wind wafted it down to the listeners.

Hawkes, who, as I have said, was furthest up, could now see the men on the opposite side moving along, and by their position guess at that of the beaters below.

His attention was shortly after attracted to a troop of monkeys in the bottom of the ravine, somewhat higher than his station. Their movements evinced some unusual excitement, as they skipped from tree to tree, gesticulating, chattering, and screeching, as if in great anger. He had heard that these creatures do, for some reason of their own, hold tigers in great aversion, which they never fail to display when they happen to discover the object of their wrath, by some such exhibition as he was now witnessing. In his boyish days he had seen the movements of magpies give a clue to the line of the fox; and he presumed that he was, perhaps, now observing a similar natural instinct on a larger scale. There was evidently some special cause for the commotion which prevailed, so unusual in the heat of the day. As he was pondering this, and wondering if a tiger was really a-foot, his gun-bearer whispered the word "Bagh" (tiger).

"Where? Where is he?" he ejaculated quickly, making ready at the same time. "I don't see him."

"No, Sahib," replied the attendant. "I only spoke for you to be prepared. I have not seen him, but the monkeys must have done so."

The chattering soon diminished. Hawkes, however, kept a vigilant look-out near the spot where the monkeys were still moving about the trees, but in an undecided sort of way. He was beginning to think there must have existed some other cause for their excitement, when he felt a twitch at his coat.

He turned sharply, and his gun-bearer pointed down into the nullah, which entered the ravine nearly at right-angles, and which formed a portion of his watch and ward. He followed the direction of the man's finger, and peered into the thick undergrowth at the foot of the trees which grew plentiful at the spot, without, for a few seconds, discerning anything. Quickly, however, he caught sight of an object moving in the shade; and, as it passed across a more open space, saw it was a tiger sneaking along with the head and body low; its whole back, from the snout to the setting on of the tail, appeared to form one straight line, the latter appendage being carried in a drooping state.

His rifle was quickly brought to bear, and he let drive both barrels in rapid succession, rolling the tiger over; but it immediately recovered itself,

A TICKLISH POSITION. [P. 185.

sprang up roaring with rage and pain, and, catching a sight of his adversary on the rock-faced bank above, came bounding towards him over the boulders and stones at the foot of the low cliff on which Hawkes stood. The hunter seized his second gun, and poured in its contents as the tiger came on, but without the effect of stopping his headlong charge. The beast reached the base of the rocky height, and, making a desperate spring, managed to gain a hold with his fore-paws on its top, but its flat and slippery face presented nothing on which to fix his hind-feet, or give it purchase to assist in dragging itself bodily to the top. As Hawkes turned to seize his third gun from the attendant, he perceived that individual some distance in the rear, racing with full power on towards the nearest tree. It was too late for him to follow suit: retreat was now out of the question; so he clubbed his gun and brought it down with force on the head of the tiger as it rested snarling between its paws within a few feet of the striker. The beast winced, but did not let go its hold; indeed, appeared to redouble its efforts to effect a lodgment. The stock flew into splinters as it came in contact with the hard skull of the tiger; but Hawkes continued to belabour him with the barrels. He laid on with a will, but the result was yet doubtful. Despite the desperate blows, the beast

maintained his position; and, had he not been weakened by his wounds, would probably have made good his object.

All this time it had been growling, with rage depicted in every line of its countenance. Suddenly it emitted a short low roar, a quiver seemed to run through it, its jaws relaxed, its eyes lost their fire, its hold of the rock gave way, and it fell back crashing among the boulders of rock and bushes into the nullah below, a distant rifle crack accompanying its downfall.

"Hurrah!" Hawkes shouted in mad excitement, brandishing his gun-barrels. "Hurrah! He's cooned. Yoicks! Tally ho!"

"Run for it. For God's sake, get into a tree!" shouted Norman from the other side of the nullah, in eager, anxious tones. "He may get up, and be at you again by some path."

"No, no, it's all right. He's cooned. Tul-lul-lul-laietee!" and Hawkes continued to make excited demonstrations as he stood on the rock and looked over.

"Get back, man, get back. Are you mad?" Norman again shouted, with much anxiety. "Perhaps he's only stunned. I can't answer for hitting him again. Run off, confound you; run away, will you!"

"It's all serene, old fellow," was the reply. "I see him lying quite still, and dead as a door-nail. There he is under the tree."

"Ah! I twig him," ejaculated Norman, and again the rifle spoke. But this time there was no responsive roar. "Dead, I believe," he said. "Quick there, gun-bearer, the other gun," and he seized his second gun from the man, who now came running up.

It now occurred to Hawkes that he too might as well provide himself with another weapon. So, while Norman was reloading his rifle, with his gun lying cocked before him all ready for use, in case the tiger showed any signs of life, he looked about for his attendant.

"If you have quite recovered from your mad fit of dancing and howling," said Norman, "I recommend you, Hawkes, to get hold of another gun, and we can then go down to the beast."

This Hawkes was soon able to do; for the gun-bearer, seeing that the danger was past, descended from his perch in a neighbouring tree, and approached his master with considerable misgivings as to the nature of his reception.

With a hearty cuff, and an anathema on the poor wretch's want of nerve, Hawkes took his gun, and both the sportsmen descended, each from his side,

to the prostrate tiger, which they found lying quite dead.

"I say, Hawkes, that was a narrowish shave," observed Norman. "It might have been an awkward scrape."

"Ay, indeed," was the reply. "And many thanks to you, old fellow, for getting me out of it so well. How came you to be there just in the nick of time?"

"Well, when I saw the movements of the monkeys, I made sure a tiger was on foot, and I just caught a glimpse of him as he turned up your nullah. While I was running forward towards it, I heard your shots; then the roaring; and, lastly, saw the brute trying to get at you. It was a longish and rather ticklish shot, but there was no help for it; so I pulled up and fired, and I see have broken the tiger's spine. You have left your marks on him also, for here are two—three bullet-holes."

"Yes, I knocked him over with the first shot near this very place," said Hawkes. "I wonder at his charging when I was so much above him. I thought it was an understood thing that tigers seldom look up."

"It is certainly a theoretical opinion. As a rule, tigers do sneak along without looking up. But, practically, it would never do to rely entirely on it.

If they detect an adversary, their rage naturally leads them to attack him. You mustn't suppose that because you are above a beast he may not perceive whence his wounds are received. Any slight noise or movement will attract his attention. But, I say, what made you so frantic after I rolled the brute over?"

"Oh, I don't know," said the young fellow. "I was awfully excited, I suppose; and it was deuced jolly to see the beast disappear from his perch in so sudden a manner. His snarling mouth and tremendous ivories had an awkward, unpleasant look about them, I can assure you. But I saw it was all up with him by his face when you struck him; and so, I imagine, sang my pæan of triumph."

"The gun-bearer had bolted, I suppose, hadn't he?" inquired Norman.

"Yes, and that reminds me I have not properly rewarded him. He ought to get a good licking, shouldn't he? He left the empty rifle lying on the ground, and bolted with my loaded third gun. And you see it has cost me this unfortunate weapon," and Hawkes dolefully regarded the remains of his much-cherished "Westley Richards."

"It's a nuisance, certainly," Norman replied; "but I must confess if I had been in the poor devil's place, I should have felt a strong itching to

bolt too. I don't wonder at his nerves proving unequal to so close an acquaintance. He might certainly have had the grace to leave the loaded gun behind; only, unfortunately, on these occasions the correct thing is not remembered till afterwards."

"Come here, you scoundrel," said Hawkes to the man. "Look here! do you see this gun, or rather what was once a gun? It is all through you that it is smashed. Why, if you and all your family were to be sold, it would not bring enough to buy one like it. What do you think ought to be done to you?"

The wretched creature averred with many protestations that he would never run away again as long as he lived. If the Sahib would only forgive him this time, he would show how faithful he would be in future.

Rugonauth now made his appearance, having stopped the beaters when he heard the shots, and hastened to ascertain the result, and if his services were required.

"Sahib," he said, "I knew it. I told you there would be more than one dead beast taken to the tents to-day."

When told, however, that at one time it looked very much as if one of the hunters themselves might prove to be the second beast he referred to, he railed

in vigorous terms at the unfortunate gun-bearer, who put his hands together in an attitude of supplication, without speaking a word. But the beat was not yet over; so he returned to set the line once more in motion, advising the sportsmen to keep about a hundred yards a-head of them when they reached the vicinity of their present position. This they did, but without seeing anything except a brace of hyænas, at which they did not consider it worth while to fire.

"Eh!" said Mackenzie, when they reached him, and related the particulars of the affair. "Nearly boned! Thick-skulled tiger! Gun smashed! By Jove! you have all the luck. Here have I been cooling my heels over this rock for a good three hours, and seen nothing but a hyæna and a wild cat."

"Luck do you call it!" exclaimed Hawkes. "It is rather an expensive kind of luck, and one I shouldn't appreciate many opportunities of enjoying. It is rather damaging to one's battery; and I cannot say the sensation is altogether pleasant when you find a snarling devil within a few feet and longing to crunch you. It is a sort of luck, Mac, where a little goes a precious long way. At the time I would very willingly have changed positions with you: I give you my word I would."

"Ha! hum! Well, perhaps you would! I don't mean to say that I should particularly wish to make quite so close an acquaintance with a wounded tiger. But why didn't you bolt?"

"No time. He was clinging on to the rock in a flash after I fired. If I had once knocked him off his perch down below, I should have made short tracks of it and no mistake."

"And yet, Mac," said Norman, "would you believe it? When I dropped the brute, he made no attempt to leg it; but brandished his gun-barrels and danced about like an Indian."

"Well," said Mackenzie, "I heartily congratulate you on getting so well out of the scrape. I say! won't Miss Verney be all in a tremor when you tell her of it, eh? We must let the skin fall to your lot in the division of the spoils. Pretty present for her."

"Thanks. I should like it, I confess," the young fellow laughingly replied, "but not for her. The poor old governor at home," he continued, more seriously, "will like to possess it, I know; and every time he looks at it, will remember the trump of a fellow who saved his son."

"Save! nonsense!" ejaculated Norman. "It would have been just the same whether you were there or not. But come along; Rugonauth says

there is nothing more to be done, so we had better be moving homewards."

"Yes," replied Mackenzie, "let us be jogging, for I intend to produce a tin of stewed eels at dinner, in honour of Hawkes' escape."

"Hear, hear!" said Norman, applauding the unwonted liberality with regard to the hermetically sealed supplies of the cautious caterer.

Young Hawkes said nothing; and his friends pretended not to see that the lad's eyes glistened and his heart was full, as he thought of the old man in his distant home, and the bright smiles of a sister's sunny face, and the effect the news of his death—if such had been—would have had on them. But with the buoyancy of youth, his face soon cleared, and he was chatting with his wonted gaiety long ere they reached the camp.

"Well, this is a day of luxury," said Mackenzie, as some soup in tea-cups was placed before each of the party, when they sat down to dinner the same evening. "Smells rather strong though, does it not? Gad! that's the queerest soup I ever tasted," he continued, as he took a large spoonful. "What is it made of, Sheik Hussein? Not the bear, I hope."

"Bear-soup? No, your honour. I have been a butler since many years, but I never saw bear-soup."

"Then what the devil is it?" asked Norman. "Why, here is a great long bit of stuff like a man's finger in it."

"Sahib, it is the European soup which my master gave out."

"Why, I am damned," ejaculated Mackenzie profanely, "if he hasn't gone and made soup out of our stewed eels. Why, Sheik Hussein, you old rascal, those were fish—eels—to be served up in a dish."

"Sahib," replied the servant, with solemnity, "it makes very good rich soup. Perhaps your honour does not understand how to cook the English articles in the tins. I have seen many cooked; and Manuel read out from the cover on another tin, that they should be mixed with boiling water. That is what I have done before."

"Those were the soup-tins, you donkey, you! This is to eat—not to drink. What a bore, isn't it, you fellows?" continued Mackenzie, turning to his friends, and sniffing irresolutely at his tea-cup. "Such a piece of stupidity. And I was looking forward to the eels. Of course this is only fit to be thrown away." But still he sniffed and tasted without sending it from the table.

After several experiments, each agreed that, after all, it was not so bad. It would be a pity to

waste it. It was a little change. And in effect each eventually consumed his portion, and that without any violent effort to overcome repugnance to it.

After the eel-soup was disposed of, another surprise was in store for two of the party. Manuel, the Portuguese servant, brought in and placed on the table, with much complacency, a fine roasted peafowl, about twice the size of the little dish on which it was cunningly balanced. As he retreated behind his master's chair, he looked fondly at the bird, and then with much satisfaction round the table.

"Halloo! where did this come from?" inquired Hawkes. "We seem to be in luck to-day."

"Manuel shot it," replied Mackenzie. "I knew this fellow, Norman, would be objecting to our shooting any small game about, if I proposed it, for fear of frightening away tigers and bears, so I left one of my guns behind to-day for Manuel to try his luck. Now, don't grumble, Norman, the deed is done now."

"Yes, sar," observed Manuel, who had been evidently waiting in expectation of being questioned. "Captain Sahib lend gun. I tell master I littly good shot; so go to the jungle with Baloo, and shoot two peacock and six fine pijuns. This one I

shoot. Master, please eat; then it very good and soft. All same as young lady peacock."

"Mac," said Norman, reproachfully addressing that individual, "what an old belly-worshipper you are! To think that, with all the advantages you have so often derived from my improving society, you should still remain unimpressed with the necessity of extreme caution in the conduct of such an important affair as sport. I am afraid all my lessons have been quite lost on you."

"Then, of course, as you decline to appear to sanction the deed, you will be consistent enough to prefer a bit of that tough old fowl to a slice from the breast of this bird,—a nice young plump one it is."

"No, hang it. As you say, 'the deed is done;' so I don't see why I should not reap the benefit of it. But, Manuel, you must be quite a shikaree."

"I not very great shikaree like master," modestly replied the individual last addressed, "but I pretty much good for poor servant-man. Mr. Sheik Hussein, he not think I can shoot, and smile and make fun; but when Baloo show the peacocks and pijuns, then he ask me for to shoot more for 'hullal karo'" (to be rendered lawful by having a brief invocation

pronounced before life is quite extinct; and without which no Mussulman will eat any slaughtered animal).

Sheik Hussein looked doubly solemn as his name occurred in the conversation; which being carried on in English, he did not understand, but at the nature of which he easily guessed.

"Why do you call it the same as a young lady peacock?" asked Norman. "Is it so tender, Manuel, as to be fit for young ladies?"

"No, sar, I not mean that; but it all same as one young missee baba. It no old and hard like Brigadier Mem Sahib."

"Oh! I see. You mean it is tender, and young in age, and a female."

"Yes, master, please, young female."

"Did you see plenty of them?" inquired Hawkes.

"Yes, sar," was the reply. "I see plenty much, but not all young female. The other I shoot, she very much old, like the burree (literally, big; meaning here, socially so) Mem Sahib. What master call, old female."

"Manuel," said Mackenzie, as he subdued his laughter, "are you aware that you have called a distinguished lady by the term 'old female?' If it ever comes to her ears, you will catch it."

Poor Manuel had a very wholesome dread of the

lady in question, who was known by common report to be a desperate tartar; and he was by no means gratified with the chaff he received, or the references to "a dozen" occasionally made; so he took an early opportunity of escaping.

CHAPTER XI.

Caution and Foolhardiness—Anecdotes—A raging Lion—An ingenious Ruse—Knotted Snakes—A Bear and Soda-Water—Shooting Panther flying—Shooting "in arrest"—Bear *versus* Bayonet.

THE circumstance of Hawkes' narrow escape, as narrated in the last chapter, led the hunters to converse on the subject of escapes in general from tigers and other wild beasts; and also of the many who had fallen victims.

The two elder had heard of numerous instances where the sportsman had not been so fortunate as Hawkes; but, though escaping death, had been sadly mauled. And, alas! the Indian newspapers are unhappily also numerous, which contain accounts of some promising young fellow's death, owing to a want of caution, or to extreme foolhardiness in following the sports of the field. Peril, to some extent, there must be, with such powerful and dangerous beasts to fight and slay. But prudence and caution greatly diminish this, and vastly reduce the risk both to sportsmen and beaters. Some

degree of danger naturally lends attraction to sport in the eyes of enterprising men of sound nerves and healthy organisation. But to court it unnecessarily, implies a want of those qualities which characterise the accomplished shikaree. With him, care and caution signify no want of pluck; but judgment controls its abuse. He is just as daring, just as keen—perhaps more so—than the headstrong young fellow who, scorning the advice of the more experienced, rushes into danger where no advantage is to be gained by it. Therefore, young sportsmen of India, do not imagine that a foolhardy contempt of precaution is simply an exhibition of superior pluck; or the reverse, that of its want.

The three friends discussed the circumstances attending the accidents related by each; and many valuable maxims, as to future careful conduct in the field, were laid down; some, perhaps, to be observed; others to be broken without the slightest compunction in the excitement of the moment.

From grave stories, however, they turned to those of a gayer nature—sporting and otherwise.

"I remember," said Norman, "a story told me some time ago, relating to an acquaintance of my own. He is a queer fellow, full of fun, and always ready for a joke; and has a ludicrous way of making faces and emitting curious howls, which I

defy the most solemn Methodist to witness unmoved. The nature of the man renders what I am going to tell you appear more absurd than the real narrative itself justifies ; but as I can't convey a proper idea of that, I will just tell you what was told to me. I must state first though, that the poor fellow got a bad fall with his horse some years ago, by which his leg was broken, and he has been obliged ever since to wear some iron apparatus to assist it, for the broken leg is considerably shorter than the other. But though this necessarily obliges him to hobble, he can scuttle over the ground at a wonderful pace. In other respects he is a tall, good-looking man.

"He was out once lion-shooting in Kattiawar. In some parts of the district, where it is tolerably open, the sportsmen used to follow the game on horseback, ride up within range, and then dismount to get a shot, unless their beasts were steady enough to stand fire from their backs. After the shot, they quickly remounted and galloped off. In fact, something in the manner that the African way of conducting the sport is described.

"On one occasion, my friend had turned up a couple of full-grown lions, and was following them on the plain. He managed to get within range, and, as his horse would not stand quiet enough for

him to fire from its back, jumped off, and threw the bridle over his arm; by some chance, however, omitting to slip his hand through it. Well, he got a fair shot, and hit one of the lions hard; but the noise startled the horse, and, as there was nothing to check it, away it galloped, leaving my friend standing. He fired his second barrel, and then had the horror of seeing the wounded lion come charging down towards him, all head, tail, and legs, and roaring tremendously. His rifle was empty and useless, and of course there was no time to load. His first impulse was naturally to bolt as hard as he could; and, accordingly, away he stumped for the nearest tree. But long before he could reach it, the roars came closer and closer behind him; and he felt that he had not the slightest chance of reaching the tree before being overtaken by the angry brute. Still he sped on with the instinct of self-preservation; but the lion was fast closing with him. What could he do? There was no time to be lost. In a few more bounds his head might be crushed in by the blow of a paw, or his mangled limbs be quivering in the animal's relentless jaws. It suddenly occurred to him to try and startle the beast by some unusual combination of form and sounds. His resolve was immediately taken, and acted on without delay. Stopping short

suddenly in his race, with his back still towards the charging lion, now drawing very close, he ducked his head and body till he looked at it reversedly from between his legs, and in that position made some of his most hideous faces, and gave utterance to some of his most appalling yells, and, at the same time, gesticulated wildly with his arms.

"This was a metamorphosis for which the savage beast was quite unprepared. Just before, there had been a runaway man, legging it as hard as he could go in front; but now there was a fearful, shapeless creature stationary and unyielding, and howling in the most awful way, quite beyond all lion experience. The brute was staggered, and hesitated in his headlong career; then pulled up and looked; advanced a step, and looked more closely; heard a frantic yell of extra power, the last despairing effort of the hunter; turned, and with lowered tail, trotted off to join his companion, now disappearing in the distance. After a short space, my friend arose, almost purple in the face from the violence of his exertions, and the unpleasantly low position of his head; but much gratified, and chuckling greatly at the success of his ingenious ruse."

"Oh, come, Norman!" said Hawkes, laughing; "that is a good one."

"I tell you what," observed Mackenzie, "if you

have got many more like that, you might edit a new edition of Munchhausen with much interesting and additional matter never heretofore made public, as the advertisements would say. Where on earth did you pick that story up?"

"Well, gentlemen," returned Norman, "you may have a want of faith in the credibility of the story, and I must confess, that I have myself—to use an expression of Mac's countrymen—"a vera shrewd suspeecion" it is, speaking mildly, slightly embellished; but I assure you, as far as the main facts are concerned, I tell the tale as it was told to me some years ago."

"Then all I can say is," retorted Mackenzie, "that your informant must have had very free and liberal ideas on the subject of *facts*. But let me see," he continued, reflectively, "I think I remember one, certainly not equal in dramatic effect to yours, but still curious enough to excite astonishment among the weak-minded."

"That's right, Mac," said Hawkes. "Let us see if we are weak-minded by your power of astonishing us."

"Well, since you are so pressing, here goes. It was told at a dinner-party a good long time ago. I remember a parson had started the subject of uncommon occurrences, by telling an anecdote, of

which all I can recollect is, that it was something about a friend of his who, while out shooting, had fired at a rabbit and skinned it with the shot. It seemed queer ; as the details, however, have altogether gone from my memory, I shall say nothing more about it. After that and one or two others, our host related that a friend of his was sitting one morning early in the verandah of his house enjoying his usual morning cup of tea. He was lolling about, as is usual, with his legs up and his chair tilted back, when his attention was attracted by the singular movements of a number of his poultry, which were running about the compound. Some of them were scuttling about under the hedge, and running to and fro in great excitement. Every now and then, one would rush out into the open, evidently bolting, or trying to bolt, something it had picked up. The officer watched them for a short time, but without being able to make out what they were up to ; so he went towards them to ascertain the cause of their extraordinary movements. There he found a number of very small snakes jumping about in a state of great liveliness, and trying to avoid the fowls—guinea-fowls, I think, they were said to be—who were pecking at them, and seizing them, and making desperate efforts to swallow them, evidently considering they had found a great prize. But after

many futile efforts, the fowls were always obliged to eject them. They were very minute, possibly only just hatched: so, as the officer saw no cause for their being invariably returned when the fowls were so anxious to swallow them, he made a closer investigation. He found that, immediately they were seized,—fearful, doubtless, of slipping too easily down the gullets of their assailants,—the cunning little snakes tied themselves into knots, and thus rendered themselves too bulky to be swallowable."

"Good, Mac, very good. Not one of your own, is it?" inquired Norman.

"No, by Jove; my imagination is not so fertile," was the reply.

"I'll tell you how to improve the story," said Norman. "Just add, that after one or two had actually been swallowed in their usual state of natural attenuation; the rest, taking warning by the fate of their companions, resorted to the highly cute and satisfactory dodge you have described."

"Thanks. Yes, I'll make that improvement next time. But after all, instinct may really have taught the snakes to coil themselves up into balls, and in that form prove too large for the fowls."

"Yes; there usually is some foundation for most travellers' tales. Indeed, many that appear the

most unlikely, are really truer than others received with faith. But I will give you another *apropos* of the subject we started with,—narrow escapes from animals,—though I will not vouch for its having any substantial foundation at all. The relater of it said that he was out bear shooting one day, and had been engaged in following one he had wounded. His people, however, lost the track, and while they were searching for it, or trying to find out something certain regarding the beast's line of retreat, he determined to rest under a tree, and have a sandwich and a glass of brandy and soda-water. He was rather a luxurious sort of fellow, and generally had a bottle or two of soda-water with him cooling in wet cloths.

"He got hold of his pewter, poured a little brandy into it, and revelled in the anticipation of the cold grateful effervescing drink,—and you know how delicious and reviving it is during a hot day's work. Seated, with his pewter mug between his legs, after carefully untwisting the wires which bound the cork, he was gently easing the cork itself out, so as not to lose a drop of the precious liquid. With great care, and with a mouth watering for the drink, he was eyeing the upward progress of the cork, when he was startled by the growling—oogh—oogh—of an angry bear. He was a short fat fellow,

and by no means active, so I should not be correct in saying he 'jumped up,' for that with him was an impossibility—but he started, and looked up; and there, bearing down on him along the jungle path, was his wounded friend, and not more than four or five yards off. He was perfectly aghast; he had no time to bolt, or even to seize his gun, which was resting against another tree; so, in the desperation of the moment he raised his bottle to hit the bear over the head or nose, for he remembered their peculiar sensitiveness in that prominent feature. At that very moment the cork flew out with a sharp bang, hit bruin, as luck would have it, right on the nose itself, and the contents of the bottle, being well up, flew fizzing and sputtering over his face and eyes. This was a reception he had not calculated on. Instead of seizing my friend, he hastily turned aside in terror, and made the best of his way into the jungle; while my friend hastened his exit with the bottle, which, truly and correctly aimed, and yet half full of soda-water, hit him on the stern, and scattering its cold contents over him caused him to redouble his speed. Now, you see, that story rests on my *bare* assertion, so I don't often tell it."

"Rather *bare-faced* if you did, I think," responded Hawkes.

"Come, come, none of that exchange of wit. As

commander of the expedition I won't stand it," interposed Mackenzie.

"If you had only said won't *bear* it, Mac; or that it was *unbearable*, or asked us to *forbear*," said Norman, "you would have immortalised yourself. Come, it's your turn now for another story."

"Well, to turn from fiction to fact. You remember poor L——, Norman. He died, Hawkes, long before you joined the regiment. He was very keen for sport in his young days, and I remember was out once when I was quite a youngster, before I was out of my griffinage even. He was rather a careless sportsman, and didn't think much of caution. On the occasion I refer to, he had wounded a panther; and deuced awkward customers they are sometimes. I think, as a rule, they charge more home, and are more difficult to stop or turn, than tigers. However, rather foolishly he allowed the beaters to go into the jungle, in twos and threes, to beat the beast up, instead of keeping them in a compact body. And he himself, with a couple of men, also advanced in the direction of where he believed the beast to be lying. Presently, there was a tremendous roar; a few bounds towards a little party of two or three beaters; a spring; an impression left on the beholders of a spotted mass cleaving through the air; a gun shot; and a heavy

fall. Then arose a yell of wonder and delight. At the very feet of the terror-stricken men the panther had fallen, stone dead, shot in the air like a quail. Poor L——'s snap shot had fortunately taken instant effect; the bullet passing through the brain. After he went up to the beast, and was congratulating himself on the narrow escape of the men, he observed that all, as they came up, prostrated themselves before him, muttering brief invocations as they did so. In fact, the quickness and precision of the shot, so wonderful to them, and the sudden preservation of their comrades from death, made them look upon him as a god; and they made reverence to him accordingly."

"Ay, I recollect hearing something of that soon after I joined," observed Norman. "But do you remember that other panther affair which happened somewhere about the same time,—that of S—— and the colonel?"

"I never heard it," said Hawkes. "What was it?"

"S—— had only been with the regiment a short time then, and went out one day with the colonel after a panther which they had heard of. They had a few sepoys with them, I believe, with their muskets. Well, the beast got wounded, and the old colonel impressed on his young subaltern the

necessity of extreme caution. He was not much of a sportsman, and had no idea of rushing into danger himself, or of allowing the youngster to do so either. They were obliged to separate, however; so, with strict injunctions to the lad to be very careful, and get into a tree which he pointed out, he established himself in a safe position on a rock overlooking the whole place, in some part of which the panther was lying.

"S——, as directed, went towards the tree; but he had only just got into it, when a sepoy came up to him, and said he knew the very spot in which the beast was, and could take him up to it. The lad was greatly excited, and without the slightest hesitation got out of his tree, and accompanied the sepoy through the thick jungle. This was seen by the colonel from his elevated position, and he immediately shouted to S—— to know what he was doing, and ordered him to return to the tree immediately.

"The youngster replied, without heeding the order to return, that he was going to kill the panther.

"The old colonel, in great trepidation, and really anxious for his young friend's safety, again shouted to him.

"'Don't advance another step, sir,' he cried. 'Return to your tree, or I will put you under arrest.

Do your hear, S ·?' he continued, as not the slightest attention was paid to his orders. Still no reply, or the smallest attempt at stopping in his onward progress.

"The old fellow was now really alarmed at the boy's temerity, and with angry and vehement gesticulations threatened all sorts of pains and penalties, and at last there and then placed him in arrest.

"'It's as much as your commission is worth, sir, to advance a single step,' he said. 'I place you in arrest now, sir. You are to return here to me, sir, this moment. I, your commanding officer, order you to do so at once. It is breaking your arrest to disobey me.'

"But no heed whatever was paid to these remonstrances and orders. Indeed, it is doubtful if, in his excited state, the boy fully realised his colonel's threats. However that may be, at that moment the mere trivial fact of being placed in arrest would have been regarded with the greatest unconcern, when weighed with the death of a panther—the first he had ever seen. So he continued on, without vouchsafing a reply to his excited commandant; was conducted to a spot whence he obtained a good view of the beast, and there and then shot him dead, to his no small gratification and delight.

"'It's all right, colonel,' he shouted, in gleeful

tones and in great triumph, and quite regardless of his position as an officer in arrest. 'It's all serene. I've polished him off. Come and have a look at him, he's such a beauty.'

"Of course the colonel thought it necessary to administer a mild whig to his insubordinate ensign; but there was no special allusion made to the fact that, properly speaking, he ought to be in 'durance vile.'"

After the two listeners had sufficiently applauded this story, Mackenzie related how, "on one occasion, three officers of his regiment, on detachment duty, had gone after a bear. They had no guns with them, but two provided themselves with the muskets and bayonets of their men, and the third with a very blunt sword. One of the musketeers got a shot; but whether he missed or wounded was never properly ascertained. However, the bear charged, and was received on the point of the bayonet. The blunt weapon failed to penetrate, but was bent by the force of the shock, and its holder, luckily for him, sent sprawling down the hill. The swordsman now came to the rescue, attacked the astonished beast 'en arrière,' and, either taking it by surprise, or astounding it with the suddenness and velocity of his onset, caused its abrupt retreat, while the victor chased it, and belaboured it with his blunt sword as

long as he could keep up. However, I need hardly say that was not for long; so the beast got away, probably scathless."

There was no game marked down the next day; so the three hunters went out early in the afternoon to try their luck after samber and cheetul, at a place some miles off, and said to be a favourite resort; and none of them returned empty-handed.

Hawkes made a neat shot at a cheetul-buck, which he stalked, and knocked it over. On going up to give it the *coup de grâce*—or rather, entrusting that duty to his attendant, for he was hardly yet sufficiently practised enough to cut a deer's throat himself without much reluctance—he attempted to seize the animal's legs while the man, knife in hand, tried to get a firm hold of its head. Objecting, however, to the intended operation, he,—to use Hawkes' expression, as he afterwards recounted the adventure,—"fought like blazes to prevent having his throat cut." Though he was unable to rise from the ground, he struck out and struggled vigorously with his captors; sent the shikaree, knife and all, flying, and kicked a piece clean out of Hawkes' jacket and shirt. Fortunately the blow was just short of the arm, or he might have had to rue the day he so unwarily seized the legs of the prostrate buck. The

shikaree got up, rubbing his shins, from which a good-sized piece of skin had been peeled; and it was some time before he could be prevailed on again to approach the deer. Its relaxing strength, however, soon gave them a more favourable opportunity, and the finishing stroke was administered without further mishap. Hawkes brought home also a doe-cheetul, which was killed without any special circumstances attending its death.

Norman made a very scientific stalk. He observed a buck-cheetul feeding on a distant hill, and immediately set about to circumvent him. There was a rising ground in the vicinity of the animal which, he considered, could he attain, would bring him within a very easy shot. So nicely had he calculated indeed, that when—after a rapid stalk and creeping up the hill—he peered over its top he saw the buck's horns within ten yards of him. He waited till the body came into view, and then shot it.

As he was returning towards home, having killed a samber in addition to the cheetul, he came unexpectedly upon a large herd of the latter, and obtained a good shot at another fine buck. It evidently told, but the cheetul went off, though in a direction different to that the rest of the herd had taken. Norman followed for awhile, and then ran on to a nullah, into which he thought it probable it

had gone; but after looking about for some time, and finding no trace of it, he returned to the place where it had been wounded, with the object of taking up its pugs. He was by himself, as his spare gun-bearer had gone to fetch men to carry home the game already slain; and now he found, as he had often before done, the advantage of being able to track.

There was no blood on the trail; and many, from that fact alone, would have given up further pursuit as useless. But he came to one place where the pugs were quite irregular, as if the deer had staggered, or stumbled badly; and continuing on for about three hundred yards further, found the creature lying dead.

After tearing a piece off his puggree, and tying it to a wand which he stuck upright over the body, he carefully retraced his steps, breaking branches off the bushes as he passed along. This plan he pursued as far as a tall tree, which was a prominent object, and to which he thought he could direct the men from the village, knowing that if they once reached it, his marks would be a sufficient guide for them to find the deer. And when the deer was subsequently brought in, he improved the occasion by again reading a lesson to Mackenzie on the advantage of knowing how to track, and lamenting

his friend's deficient knowledge in that important branch of woodcraft. As for young Hawkes, he eagerly took every opportunity of perfecting himself in so desirable a part of his sporting education; indeed, he would criticise the pugs even of the dogs wandering among the tents, with the view of ascertaining if the impressions were two days, one day, or only a few hours old.

Mackenzie also returned with a good bag—indeed the heaviest of the three—for he had killed a blue-bull or neilghye, and a brace of samber. One of the samber had given him a good deal of trouble to kill. He had at first obtained a broadside shot at about eighty yards, but hit rather far back. He again, however, came up with it, but it took four bullets before it was finally disposed of. The other he had shot dead when running at full gallop through the jungle. He was the more fortunate, for, his feet being yet somewhat blistered, he could not work very much, and was still in slippers.

They were all surprised at the quantity of game about in the valley, down which all three had been shooting, each having seen many more than he killed; and between them, also, several unsuccessful shots had been fired.

There was great rejoicing both in the little camp

and village that evening at the abundance of meat and men even came over from some villages miles distant to secure a portion of the unusual supply. So there was none wasted.

CHAPTER XII.

She-bear and Cub—Motherly Instinct—Sporting Compunction—Manajee.

Early the next morning, men came in to report that a she-bear and cub had been marked down, but at a considerable distance from the camp.

The hunters descended the valley for about three miles, and then struck up one of the lateral gorges which debouched there. These were of frequent occurrence, and the upper and more rugged parts of them appeared to be the favourite resorts of the bears, who rather avoided the flat country in the valley. Mackenzie rode his pony as far up the glen as he could manage to screw it along, but was obliged at last to leave it, and trust himself to his tender feet.

A thick tract of jungle entirely covered one side of a spur running down into the valley, the ridge of which was in some parts tolerably bare. It was in the heart of this that the bear was supposed to be lying, and it was decided to try and drive her up

some one of the numerous wild-beast tracks which led over the ridge. Two of the hunters were accordingly detailed to guard that important line, the third being stationed low down amidst the jungle on the face of the hill, to prevent escape down into the glen. Mackenzie and Norman undertook the first-named duty—a couple of hundred yards separating them—Hawkes the latter. Men were placed at intervals in the upper part, while the bulk of the beaters were thrown into the side opposite Mackenzie and Norman.

Bruin was soon disturbed, and sighted by a man placed high up on the hill. It was telegraphed to Hawkes that it was afoot pretty close to him, but, owing to the thickness of the jungle, he was unable to see it, and it soon made its way up the hill, and rather bending from its original course, so as to run parallel with the ridge; but, before reaching it, took one of the paths which led to the upper part of the hill. Owing to the precautions taken of having men placed there, however, the bears turned and made towards Mackenzie, who was highest on the ridge. Norman had been gradually moving up towards him, as he was informed by the look-outs on the neighbouring eminences that the beasts had passed him, and were travelling up. The shouting in so many different directions now seemed to con-

fuse them, for they moved to and fro in an undecided manner, as if not knowing which direction to take. At last, they seemed resolved to cross the ridge; and this fact was announced with incessant shouting from the men above, though as yet neither of the hunters had caught a single glimpse of the game. Directed, however, by the vociferous warnings of the men, they each, from different spots, watched a part of the jungle where it was somewhat scantier, and almost at the same moment discerned a dark object moving through the bushes. It might have been forty yards from Mackenzie, and double that distance from Norman.

The view was not very clear; nevertheless, the opening of both batteries was responded to by roars, and the dusky object rolled over. Quickly recovering itself, however, it again essayed to move on, and was immediately lost to view. It was next seen crossing the ridge high up, but only for a moment. Having forced the line of the ridge, it made away on the other side. But there was, in the direction of its retreat, a considerable space unencumbered with jungle, and across this it was obliged to pass. Both of the hunters had run forward, in the hope of obtaining shots, though longish ones, as it re-appeared. When it did so, the cub was seen making strenuous efforts to climb on to its

mother's back. It had probably originally been there, but, when the old one was knocked over, lost its hold. Norman fired, but apparently without effect. Mackenzie almost immediately after let drive also; missed the old one, but hit the little beast, knocking it off its legs, summarily putting a stop to its exertions to mount on its mother's back. The old one continued on; but either missing its young one, or having its attention attracted to the squeaking growls it continued to utter, now some distance in the rear, she turned in her tracks, and came right back into the jaws of danger to look after it.

She was soon beside, and assisting it as best she could, and doubtless at the same time encouraging and advising it. At any rate, protected and escorted by the mother, the cub managed to hobble away alongside, and both soon after disappeared. The old one, as she returned, had been received with a couple of shots from the hunters; but when they saw her object, and how, regardless of danger, true motherly instinct prompted her to come to the assistance of her offspring, they had not the heart to interfere with her, and accordingly refrained from again firing.

I am not prepared to say that, had she been close enough for them to make pretty sure, they would

have been so considerate. The excitement of close quarters might have proved too strong for their feelings of sympathy; but as the circumstance happened, they did find that a disinclination to pull upon the poor beast, which had shown such tender regard for its young, overcame for a moment their thirst for slaughter. Wounded as it was, the kinder course to pursue would have been to endeavour to put an end to its pain; but this did not immediately occur to them. So, growling and squeaking in concert, the two made good their escape.

The active look-outs were soon darting from eminence to eminence, intent on distinguishing the line of flight of the game; and, if possible, again marking them down.

After a considerable time, it was announced to the hunters, that they had been seen to enter a ravine a mile or two off, and had not emerged from it.

With some grunting and grumbling on the part of Mackenzie, the three were soon threading their tortuous way up and down the steep ravines, and among the rocks and jungle which were thickly scattered over the other side of the range of hills; for in that direction the bears had ultimately gone. The ravine was at last reached; but the bears had moved, and a distant glimpse or two was obtained of them labouring slowly along towards a vast unin-

terrupted tract of dense jungle, whence it would be impossible to drive, or into which it would be useless to follow them.

After a while, too, there were conflicting statements. Some asserted these were not the wounded bears; they had, it was said, turned into another ravine which came down from the upper hills. Then another report reached them. It was declared that they had been marked into a nullah near the ridge they had left. As it was very possible there were others afoot, and as these last seen were distinctly stated to be wounded, the sportsmen decided to retrace their steps, after holding a short council of war on the subject. Certainly, it appeared strange that animals so badly wounded should journey so far as those they were following; and they consequently inclined to the belief that some others had been roused by the shouting, and been mistaken for those of which they were in pursuit.

A portion of the beaters were with some trouble collected, and returning to the upper hills, the hunters prepared to beat the nullah spoken of, and not very far from the position first assailed. But if, indeed, they had really been seen there, they must have slipped away or concealed themselves in some cavity of the rocks, for nothing turned up.

After many fruitless efforts to trace the lost game,

the hunters were reluctantly obliged to confess that the case was hopeless. The hills were so thickly covered with jungle that marking down was almost impossible.

Vast quantities of wild figs and other jungle fruit rendered it probable that this part of the country was a favourite resort of bears; indeed, this was fully attested by the "signs" in every direction, as well as by the long gashes in the higher fruit-trees made by their claws, and marking those they were in the habit of climbing. But the underwood was so dense, and extended almost unbroken over so large a tract of country, that beating was out of the question, except in parts isolated from the main jungle.

"I am really put out by our ill-luck to-day," observed Mackenzie that evening. "I declare I would far rather have had a blank day altogether than lose the game wounded, and especially under the circumstances of the poor old she-bear's motherly conduct, as shown to-day."

"You are a tender-hearted old muff, Mac, for a six-foot-fourer," Norman said. "But I agree with you. I hope the old lady was not so very much hurt after all."

"What, you suppose you little chaps are the only ones with any bowels of compassion, do you?

Now I consider we big ones have more room for it. Don't you think so, Hawkes?"

"I have not given the subject a very earnest consideration," replied the individual addressed. "But it strikes me there may be a happy medium, such as myself for instance."

"Go to, you young scamp," replied Mackenzie. "You are worse than Norman. Now I contend that——"

"There are a great number of tigers, Sahib, about Mungaum," exclaimed the imp Baloo, who abruptly came up, delighted to be the first to communicate such valuable sporting information.

"Eh! What! How do you know, you child of Satan?" inquired the Highlander, thus interrupted in his argument.

"Sahib, Manajee is——" but here he too was interrupted by Sheik Hussein, who, regarding the more active Baloo with a severe expression, formally announced that Manajee the Bheel had arrived with khubber for their lordships, and was at that very moment seated outside. He ended by saying, that if it should be the Sahib's orders he would call him.

"By all means," was the reply; "fetch him at once." And the scantily-clothed shikaree was brought forward, salaaming as he approached.

He was a short, square-built little fellow in body, mounted on a good stout pair of legs, and altogether was a remarkable contrast to Rugonauth, who was long and thin.

A few folds of dirty cloth answered the purpose of a puggree; but so scantily, that his long hair stuck up in the centre, and escaped from between its twists. His small black eyes were deep set in his head, and appeared to shine from the roots of his hair. His arms were, for a native's, brawny, and their muscles singularly well-developed, though the bone was small. His bare chest stood prominently out, garnished with an abundance of hair. He seemed to carry his wardrobe round his waist, for that was girt with a thick roll of cloth which must have rendered his head envious of the greater attention paid to the protection of the stomach and loins from sun or storm. This, too, was now swelled in size by the addition of his upper garment; at least, to judge by the ends of some foreign piece of dress which dangled from it. Perhaps he had brought with him his holiday robe to do honour to the Sahibs. His blanket had, very possibly, also formed a part of his appointments, but laid aside when ordered to enter the presence of the hunters. His shoes, however, yet stuck up from his waistcloth, balanced on the other side by

the head of a small axe, whose handle was thrust through the folds of the cloth. With nothing very particular to speak of in the way of trousers, according to Western notions of that article of dress, the free movement of his limbs was unimpeded.

Such was Manajee—"a tree to tree guide," as he delighted to call himself; and, as the sportsmen had found him, an experienced and indefatigable shikaree.

"Well, Manajee, what has brought you here?" inquired Mackenzie. "Good news, I hope."

"Good news, cherisher of the poor," was the reply.

"Have any animals come down into the rivers?" next demanded Mackenzie.

"They have, your honour. Two or three striped ones are wandering about."

"Is this from hearsay, or have you seen them?"

"With my own eyes, one I have seen. The others' pugs I have come across. I tell no lie. This is my khubber. Sahib, I am the best shikaree in the country, and know every——"

"Yes—yes, I know," interrupted Mackenzie. "But have you tracked the animals?"

"Yesterday morning, Sahib. I tracked the one I saw, and seated him in a piece of jungle near

where the tigress met her fate. I am truthful. I have not tracked the others.

"Well, Manajee, I place faith in what you say."

A deep sepulchral voice from out of the surrounding darkness was here understood to intimate that another man had come in from a village near Mungaum, and corroborated this information.

"Who speaks there? Is that you, Rugonauth?" inquired Mackenzie of the dimly visible owner of the voice.

"Yes, Sahib, it is Rugonauth," answered that individual, as, thus directly addressed, he stood forward.

"You have heard what Manajee says. Do you think we should change our camp at once to Mungaum?"

"It is the Sahib's pleasure."

"Yes; but will it be well? Will the plan be good? Speak your advice."

"Sahib," returned the old man, who was dressed in an old shooting coat, and otherwise more fully and fashionably arrayed than his comrade, "if the tigers have come down into the rivers, they will remain if undisturbed. They will wait to eat of your worship's bullets. I have heard to-day that there are some animals near Bhilgaum; should it

please the Sahib's to try that place, then perhaps, if they escaped, they would go towards Mungaum."

"Where is Bhilgaum?" asked Norman.

"Right in the midst of the hills, Sahib. The camels could not get there, except by going a very long round; but a few coolies could take what was necessary for one night, if the Sahibs could do without a tent."

After a considerable discussion it was arranged that Manajee should return to Mungaum, and, with his fellow villagers, make more particular inquiries after the visitors to his district. On the morrow, should any bear be marked down, as it was confidently predicted there would be, the sportsmen would remain to beat for it. The day after would be Sunday, and on that day they could have a rest, and allow Rugonauth to precede them to Bhilgaum.

This arranged, the shikarees were dismissed to the pipe of friendship, and doubtless held long and pleasant discourse regarding past sporting events and those hoped for in the future, with their accompanying rewards.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Man seized—Another Spread Eagle shot—At close Quarters—Anecdotes—Determined Hostility of Bears—An Officer saved by the Natives—A Bear rampant—Narrow Escape of a Lady—A "dour" from Camp—A Bullock drove—Preparations for a Night Sitting.

THE hopes for the morrow did not prove delusive. A bear was viewed into some jungle considerably beyond the devotee's hut, past which the path took the hunters. The gosein was there, and with his scholar, or disciple, whom he was instructing in the rudiments of his devotional exercises, came forward to salute the gentlemen as they passed. But they did not linger there, for they had yet a long way to go.

To each sportsman was assigned a separate spot overlooking a large tract of jungle; but either the beat was not so well arranged as usual or they were less fortunate, for the bear broke away through the beaters at a place unguarded by any of them, and, unfortunately, not without some damage to one man, who with a few fellows endeavoured to turn

him back. Resenting their interference in his plans, he charged at them, knocked one over and passed over his body, luckily without staying to inflict any further injury than that he had already caused.

When the shout arose that a man was attacked, all three of the hunters ran from their positions towards the spot to which they were directed. They found the man lying on the ground and moaning; but though the bear had left the impress of his claws on the fellow's chest, making several deep holes in the flesh, they soon saw that he was not dangerously wounded, and indeed more frightened than seriously hurt. Giving orders that he should be conveyed to the gosein's hut and there have the wounds well bathed with cold water, they continued in pursuit of the bear under the guidance of one or two men who exchanged a running fire of questions and answers with the look-outs, now springing along from point to point and marking the bear's course. Dubious though the directions and signals thus given might appear to the uninitiated, they were quite understood by the men who accompanied the hunters.

Stopping now and then for guidance as to their further course, the party went along at a fast walk or jog trot. They had been told to make a short cut across to a large ravine, which they reached;

and, after a few half intelligible shouts, were assured by their guides that the bear was said to be in the ravine and moving parallel with them. Accordingly they kept along one side of it, hoping for some opportunity of getting a shot. The place was filled with trees, and above their tops on the other side could be discerned the upper part of the cliff which formed its boundary.

The hunters could now distinctly hear the beast as, having slackened his pace, he made his way apparently along the base of the cliff. The crackling of the dried leaves and sticks plainly indicated his whereabouts, but as yet no view of his body was afforded them. Any attempt to approach him by descending into the ravine would have been useless, and only caused his more rapid flight, leaving them far in the rear before the manœuvre could be executed. All they could do was to keep on their present course and await some chance of a view.

Mackenzie had been unable to keep up with his lighter companions, and was now lagging considerably in the rear; when the leaders pulled up to listen, as the sound of the animal's progress had ceased.

Suddenly Norman cried "There he is!" and Hawkes in the same instant caught a sight of the bear appearing above the tops of the trees. It was

visible in its whole length and breadth, stretched to its utmost extent, as it strove to drag itself on to the top of the broken cliff, and presented a most tempting shot. It had surmounted all but the last ledge, and was in the very act of scrambling up that — in which case it would probably have escaped in the neighbouring jungle—when the two rifles, fired so exactly together as to give but one sound, simultaneously sent forth their death messengers.

Up went the animal's fore-paws, and with a loud roar he toppled over and disappeared behind the foliage of the trees. Headlong he fell into the underwood at the foot of the cliff; nor did his progress stop there, for the crashing of bushes and his incessant growling announced that his involuntary career was unchecked, and continued down the slope into the lowest depths of the ravine. There he managed to recover himself, and slunk back on the line by which he had advanced. He was shortly viewed by some look-outs, and marked into a thick bit of jungle of small extent, where he lay up.

The hunters were quickly again in pursuit; and, as a man declared he could take them up to the very spot in which the wounded beast was lying, they prepared to assail it in the recesses of its stronghold. Leaving Hawkes to guard an outlet in one

A SPREAD-EAGLE SHOT. P. 234.

[illegible] the other two kept on, and with [illegible] cloth-clad forms were through the [illegible] undergrowth, [illegible] upon two [illegible] expected. He was evidently awaiting their [illegible] approach and directly he saw them, jumped up and charged at them. But a couple of bullets at close quarters effectually stopped his onslaught. Don't like any more, said Mackenzie. "He meant [illegible] and meant to proved to be.

The speedy end to the encounter enabled the sportsmen to get to their tents while the sun was yet high, and as it was their last beat before leaving Mackenzie Norman raised no objections to the [illegible] going in any direction. A road was therefore made for the [illegible] and purchased on the neighbouring [illegible]. Several were bagged, and they ended the [illegible] of the week, which had been pleasantly and profitably spent at Oban.

"The man who was hoisted twelve got off cheaply, did he not?" said Hawkes that evening. "I thought bears seldom let anyone they attacked escape without mauling them a great deal."

"Not do they as a rule," replied Norman. "They have an unpleasant habit of rising on a man seizing him with their claws, and holding him in their embrace, growling at his face all the while. I have seen some frightful objects who have been

thus made examples of their wrath, and lucky I daresay they thought themselves in not being killed."

"Do bears always rise on their hind legs when attacking a man?" inquired Hawkes.

"Some suppose so, I believe," was the answer. "But I have been charged home, and dropped them at the end of my gun almost, without their doing so. It depends, I should think, on the circumstances attending their attack."

"In some parts of the country," Mackenzie said, "the natives funk bears far more than tigers. The latter, they say, nearly always endeavour to sneak away unless wounded; while bears, being of an inquisitive turn of mind and withal of a rough, uncouth, pugnacious disposition, will frequently, when casually disturbed, endeavour to ascertain who the intruder may be, and resent the intrusion. Now my first adventure at Mungaum was a case in point. They will go out of their way to attack, where a tiger would probably slip away."

"They seem plucky enough with them here," said Hawkes.

"Yes, these little hill fellows have not half so much fear as some of the tribes of the low country that I have come across. I knew an officer once shooting in the hills, who was charged by a wounded

bear. He fired, but the bullet glanced off his head, and he was immediately seized by the enraged brute. As it was, he was severely hurt; but he might have been killed, had not some of the beaters, who were at hand, rushed in with their little axes, and either drove the beast away or killed it—I forget which."

"I heard from a friend in Rajpootana not long ago," said Norman, "and he told me of a case which had recently occurred near them in the country of one of the rajahs. There is a good deal of outlawry goes on in the petty states under native government. That is to say, if any member of the family, or a noble, feels aggrieved at the conduct of the rajah, he becomes 'Barwutteah,' or places himself in outlawry, thereby causing loss and trouble to the state. Two nobles—sons, I believe, of the rajah in the petty state near which my friend resided—were in this condition; and sought to do all the injury they could to their lord paramount. Towards this end three of their armed followers seized a couple of herdsmen, and were conducting them through the jungle to their chiefs—probably with a view to ransom—when a bear, without the slightest provocation, attacked the party.

"As luck would have it, or with a discriminating

sense of poetical justice, he first attacked one of the outlaws; then, having mauled him, turned his attention to another, the herdsmen and remaining outlaw in the meantime escaping. Having satisfied the pugnacity of his nature, he decamped, leaving the two men very badly hurt. They were subsequently taken into the hospital of an irregular corps stationed in the district, when it was found that one poor wretch was quite scalped and blinded, and he soon after died. The second one was also very severely wounded; but whether he subsequently recovered or not, I have not heard."

"I remember a similar instance of determined hostility," said Mackenzie. "A native was journeying on the public made road up the mountain which led to one of our hill stations, and along which numbers of people were in the habit of passing daily. He went a few yards aside to get a drink of water at a spring frequented by the people, and was there seized by a bear, who had probably come with the same object of slaking his thirst. The beast left him, I think, on a number of other men coming up; but the poor fellow was brought into the hospital very much the worse of his undesired interview.

"At the same station," continued Mackenzie, "there is a pretty little lake, with hills sloping

down to the very brink. A friend of mine and his wife were one evening walking round it, and had reached the furthest and widest portion of its jungle-covered shore, when to his horror a bear presented itself. He was an old sportsman, and knew if the beast were irritated by shouts or efforts to drive him away it would probably attack. So, seizing his wife, he silently waded as far into the water as he could take her, and there awaited the brute's further movements. He was fortunately a strong swimmer, and had determined to endeavour to save his wife by swimming with her should the bear attack them. However, after being in this unpleasant predicament for some time, he had the satisfaction of seeing the bear take itself off, and he brought his wife to shore, and hurried her away in an opposite direction, vowing he would carry a rifle in future when extending his walks to such lonely places, though across the lake, and not more than a quarter of a mile off, the bungalows were distinctly visible."

"Natives have told me," said Norman, "that besides attacking a man's face, a bear has an ugly custom of using the claws of his hind feet at the same time, and sometimes succeeds in disembowelling him."

"In fact," said Hawkes, "they are decidedly

unpleasant companions when one has not a trusty double-barrel to depend upon."

"Just so; and even that does not always render one perfectly secure; as, for instance, in the case I mentioned, and others I have heard of. But it is hard if a couple of shots at close quarters do not either kill, disable, or turn a charging bear. It is said that a bullet, striking within the yellow horse-shoe mark on his chest, is sure to drop him. They are wanting in the structure of that part of the body; though I am not anatomist enough to know precisely in what particular bone, or how otherwise they are deficient."

The exertions of the two previous days had not tended to improve the condition of Mackenzie's feet; a complete day of rest was therefore hailed, by him at least, as not undesirable. Sunday was passed much in the same manner as the former one; orders being issued for the main camp, with spare horses, under Sheik Hussein, to move early on the morrow back to Mungaum, Manuel and Baloo, with a few cooking necessaries, being detailed to accompany the hunters themselves to Bhilgaum.

The tents were struck at night; but Sheik Hussein had requested that the march might be postponed till an early hour on the following morning, as he had a profound horror of night

jungle travelling, and was temporarily impressed with a conviction that his destiny would be to become tiger's meat.

As there was no hurry, his prayer was acceded to.

Long before dawn, the jabbering of servants, and anon the unmusical noise of the camels as they were being loaded, aroused the hunters, who, turning round, anathematised the hubbub, and endeavoured again to drop asleep.

But soon the early cup of tea, brought to their bedside, warned them it was time to be up and doing themselves.

A few of the villagers had been engaged to carry the bedding—consisting of a rug and couple of blankets each—a few cooking pots, a limited amount of supplies, both edible and potable, and the small quantity of linen and other necessaries requisite during an absence of a couple of days; for to that space of time they proposed extending their "dour" or flying expedition into the more unattainable part of the hill country which they intended visiting.

Rugonauth had gone there on the previous day, with the object of examining the country during the early morning, before the arrival of his masters.

With the first streak of dawn the sportsmen mounted their ponies, and in company with the line of coolies—each of whom carried his burden on his

head or back and shoulders—proceeded towards a pass in the highest range of hills.

Although the ponies could not exceed a walking pace over the rugged hill path—indeed, in many parts were obliged to be dismounted and led—still, as it became light, they outpaced the burdened men. With their guns carried alongside, therefore, and with some cold provisions, which rendered them independent of the light baggage till evening, the riders left it under the orders of Mr. Manuel, to follow them as best the coolies could manage, and themselves rode on ahead.

From the top of the pass a wide view was obtained, but all hills and jungle—an unreclaimed waste, except where, in the valleys, every here and there a cleared space and the presence of trees of more imposing height, perhaps also a sheen of water, denoted a village settlement. Smoke rose in many places in thick volumes, partially obscuring the valleys. In that region the jungle is often set on fire, with the view of encouraging the growth of the fresh green grass, the blades of which soon spring up midst the blackened *débris*. With the same object of promoting fertilisation, the little fields are thickly strewn with small boughs, twigs, and leaves; and this coating—several inches thick—is fired. The ashes, into which the foot sinks deep

when crossing, thus afford a manure obtained by a clearance of the neighbouring jungle.

From these causes, columns of smoke were, as I have said, frequent and prominent characteristics of the scenery.

The only sign of intercourse and communication between the different valleys connected by the wild track the sportsmen were pursuing, was a small drove of diminutive bullocks, across the pack-saddle of each of which was balanced a sack laden with either grain or charcoal.

At the unusual apparition of horsemen, and, more particularly, of white-faced horsemen, the leading bullock stopped dead, and stared. Meeting on the narrow road, one party would naturally have to make way for the other; and when the drovers observed the Englishmen, they attempted to shove some of the rear bullocks out of the path, so as to allow the gentlemen room to pass. The latter, too, were willing to turn aside into the jungle, and let the drove proceed. But the leading bullock soon settled the question. After a hearty stare, it suddenly wheeled round and dashed into the jungle, upsetting its load, and kicking up its heels in delight at the riddance. The second was not slow to follow, and in a very brief space, with the exception of the last two or three, who were hustled aside, the entire

drove was pushing and scrambling about in the jungle, most of them with their loads thrown off, or in imminent danger of being so.

The drovers were yelling and shouting, and dashing about to try and stop the runaways; and after the hunters passed, were still heard bestowing on their refractory animals the choicest epithets of Hindoo objurgation. For, though all were soon collected, it was a matter of some small time and trouble to reload and resume the march.

It was ten o'clock before the sportsmen reached the Bheel village, most of the male population of which had accompanied Rugonauth into the jungle to look for game. An old man, however, the senior of the community, was ready to receive them; and many a dusky matron and maid, from the doors of their huts or other vantage-ground, examined the hunters curiously as they passed to the shade of a tree adjacent to the village—the spot selected as their present head-quarters.

The only incident worth recording, before they reached the village, was the death of a peacock, through which Norman neatly drove a bullet at a distance of sixty yards.

The village of Bhilgaum was situated on a table-land, a portion of which had been cleared; but surrounding—and in many parts protruding on to—it,

the jungle grew thick and luxuriant, with fine forest trees here and there rising from amidst it. It was a place which might be full of game, but the difficulty would consist in finding it.

Rugonauth had not yet come in, but he had despatched a man to advise the Sahibs, on their arrival, that he was on the pug of a very large tiger. About mid-day, the old fellow himself made his appearance, and he then informed them that, though he had not positively been able to mark the beast down, owing to the extent and thickness of the jungle, he had good reason to believe that it had taken up its position in a rocky ravine about a mile distant.

On their way to the spot, the animal's pugs were shown to them in several places; indeed, during the night it had evidently been wandering in the immediate neighbourhood of the village.

The ravine—a mere rocky chasm, which seemed a collection of low jungle-covered eminences—was beaten by the few men assembled, but in vain. If "stripe-jacket" had found his way into it during the course of his morning's rambles, he had also found his way out again. It is true that only some thirty beaters could be mustered, and those included a third of the number brought on from Oonge; but the gully itself was narrow, and enclosed within

precipitous walls of rock, so that it required no large number to penetrate its recesses.

Rugonauth confessed himself at fault, and advised the sportsmen to sit up at night over a pool of water, which he assured them was much frequented by animals of all kinds.

"That 's not a sort of sport I care much for," said Mackenzie. "What do you fellows say?"

"Neither do I, Mac," replied Norman; "but I am afraid it's our only chance of getting anything in this interminable jungle."

"And then the tiger seems to be such a whopper, by his pug," added Hawkes, who was not so well versed as his companions in the uncertainties and disappointments attending night shikar. "It would be a pity to lose any opportunity of bagging such a grand fellow."

"Well, then," Mackenzie rather grumblingly observed, "I suppose it is decided that we give up our natural rest and risk our precious limbs on 'muchans,' for the chance of an uncertain shot. Norman, you know how often we have been sold. I confess I think the time is far more profitably employed in sleep."

But Norman was more sanguine, or less lazy, and adhered to his opinion, in which he was stoutly seconded by Hawkes.

"You are two to one, so I must give in," rather lugubriously responded Mackenzie to the joint remonstrances of his companions. "Are we to fire at anything that comes, or reserve ourselves for the tiger? Though I don't myself believe we shall see anything to fire at."

"Not at deer of any description, I vote," said Norman. "We can get lots of them by daylight; only at tigers, panthers, or bears,—first come, first served."

Both of the others agreeing to this resolution, it was considered carried, and under Rugonauth's guidance they went to inspect the place, and select trees overlooking the pool, for the "muchans," or rude platforms on which the sportsmen would keep their night-watch.

The trees were soon chosen, and the men set to work to cut boughs, strips of bark, supple withes, and collect leaves. They were not allowed to do this in the immediate neighbourhood, for the wild animals, with a natural distrust of the signs of man's presence, are chary of approaching a place which shows any recent alteration; and, rather than face any concealed danger, will seek other spots to slake their thirst. On this account boughs were cut and brought, and the articles collected from such a distance as should leave no lurking suspicion

in the breast of any nocturnal visitor that the vicinity of the water had been the scene of man's labours.

The branches when brought were fixed crossways, some in the forks of the trees where possible, and firmly fastened where such a rest was not obtainable. On the little platform thus constructed small branches and twigs were interwoven, and a layer of leaves placed on the top of all. The "muchan," now completed, was then concealed by arranging the boughs around it, and breaking off or turning aside one or two which intercepted a view of the water. It formed rather a hard seat for a length of time, but the watcher was able either to sit or recline in a doubled-up posture. Two were made, one on either side of the pool. One was destined to contain Mackenzie, Hawkes, and an attendant; the other, Norman and Rugonauth.

After the completion of these nests the whole party betook themselves to the village.

On their return it was found that Manuel, with his train, had arrived. He had procured three rough bedsteads from the village, and on these spread the gentlemen's rugs, so that they were able to lounge about at ease. They were engaged in this agreeable occupation, when it was announced

that the old white-bearded patriarch of the village had come to pay a formal visit and present his humble "nuzzur" (the offering of an inferior to a superior).

The "nuzzur" proved to consist of the most esteemed produce of the village, namely, a small portion of grain and of clarified butter—used in cooking—and four hen's eggs. These were handed over to Mr. Manuel; but a rupee, offered at the same time, was only touched by Mackenzie and returned. It would have shown a want of courtesy and hurt the old man's feelings had the produce been rejected; but it is an understood thing on these occasions that a touch shall be equivalent to acceptance of the money.

Manuel, assisted by Baloo, cooked and served up dinner. The box which contained the beer and supplies constituted the table, around which were drawn the beds, officiating as chairs. A stout ship's lantern, which had borne the battering of many a jungle trip, gave light enough to eat by; this was, however, supplemented as the empty beer bottles became adaptable, by their conversion into candlesticks; Manuel having taken the precaution to bring a few candles with him. A tin of soup, the peahen shot in the morning, which was converted into a stew, and a bit of very dry cheese, formed the bill of

fare. It was not a sumptuous repast, but good enough, and enjoyed as much as though it had consisted of innumerable delicacies. What mattered if the peahen did prove to be an old bird, with sinews of the very hardest texture, and altogether as tough as leather? If the soup was by no means fresh, and the cheese like wood? Their jaws were young, their digestions good, and the effeminacy of a pampered life had gained no emasculating sway over their appetites. They liked good things, though their absence caused no lament; but the English soup was a great stand-by. I think the mere fact of its being English had something to do with the approval it met with; for I doubt if any cook in England would have much cared to present it at table.

The mug, too, afforded as much gratification to the thirsty well-exercised sportsmen as the choicest vintages had done at other and more luxurious times.

"Toothsome stuff that soup," said Mackenzie, as he dug into the peafowl. "I bought a lot cheap the other day."

"Good enough," said Hawkes, who had yet some lingering reminiscence of English cookery. "A trifle stale though."

"Why, what an epicure you are!" returned Mackenzie.

'It was an improvement on the stewed-eel soup at any rate," remarked Norman. "It had a tinny sort of flavour, it is true; but it was good, decidedly good. I say, Manuel," he continued, turning to that person, "this is as fine a specimen of an 'old female' as ever I chewed. Something like the Brigadier Mem Sahib, eh?"

"Master, please not make too much fun. It come into the ears of the Mem Sahib, then much bobbery make."

"Well, I dare say; but don't you think you deserve it for speaking so disrespectfully of ladies?"

Manuel visibly shuddered at the idea of Mrs. Jenkins's anger, and he tried to explain. "I not mean it that, Sahib. If master please make the fun of servant-man, then how I help?"

"Well, well, Manuel, I daresay you'll escape this time. I don't think any of us will tell Mrs. Jenkins."

"No, sar, I do not fear that. But at mess, sometime, plenty much talk to other gentlemen. Then master tell story to make pleasure. Gentlemens laugh, and tell story again to young Mem Sahibs. Young Mem Sahibs laugh too; not like the burree Mem Sahib, and tell her for to make angry."

"Why, Manuel de Sousa, you are a philosopher.

Such is, indeed, no unusual way by which things get about. But 'rest at peace: we will be very careful."

"Thanks to master. I hope he not make more fun; but I much fonk before."

CHAPTER XIV.

The night Anabasis—Its efficacy—A morning Visitor—The Visitor accounted for—*Deo favente*—Sandie right and left—A doubtful neighbour—Gaelic *versus* Latin.

DINNER concluded and cheroots smoked, the party proceeded to take up their positions in the "muchans."

The moon did not rise till about ten o'clock, but they thought it best to establish themselves before that hour.

The pool was not more than half a mile distant from the village, so it was soon reached. After some trouble and a good deal of skinning of knuckles, the mighty Mackenzie was, with some aid from the whole party, hoisted on to his nest, where, with his red face and tawny beard, he looked like a bird of very questionable omen.

The others, being lighter and more active, easily established themselves in their respective positions. Guns, rugs, bottles of water—some pure, some well dashed with brandy, but all wrapped in wet

cloths—were handed up, and all made snug for a prolonged watch.

The moon was bright—but little past the full—and its rays seemed almost to carry heat as they flickered through the foliage and fell on the watchers. The pool, with its surrounding of light and shadow, glittered like a huge sparkling gem set in silver and bronze. As from their perch the hunters covered the water and the open ground near it at a distance of not more than five-and-twenty paces, it may be considered that the shot would be a tolerably certain one ; but the most brilliant moonlight is inadequate to give the sportsman perfect sureness of aim with so fine-sighted a weapon as a sporting rifle. It is said that a strip of paper along the rib of the barrel, and a touch of phosphorus to the sight, act as great auxiliaries in taking aim. On this occasion our friends had either not heard of these aids, or for some reason had neglected to make use of them—perhaps, indeed, had no faith in such devices. They hoped that, though perfection of shooting could not be relied on, they could make it sufficiently telling to kill a beast at such close range.

More than once during the first two hours the attention of the watchers was attracted by the crackling of leaves, as some animal brushed through

the jungle. But it only proved to be samber or some smaller deer coming to slake their thirst. These little interruptions served to keep them wakeful and on the look-out; but when some three or four hours had passed, and oft-repeated disappointments had cooled the sanguine hopes with which the animals' approach was heralded, their vigilance relaxed, and more than one began to feel drowsy.

Mackenzie was the first to succumb to the influence of the hour and the stillness of the place. Giving strict injunctions to the attendant to pinch and shake him on the first intimation of the approach of any game coming within the category of those at which it was lawful to fire, he stretched himself out and, disposing of his legs as best he could, was soon fast asleep.

Hawkes had tried to dissuade him from giving in so soon, and had Norman been there he might, possibly, have been induced to hold up for another half-hour; but all his companion's expostulations were of no effect. He slept, and would have continued to do so indifferently well, notwithstanding the discomfort of his position, had not his rest been distracted by sundry punches in the ribs. These Hawkes occasionally administered as the sleeping man's heavy breathing ripened into a snore or

approached a grunt. But soon even these reminders ceased to interfere with the peaceful slumber of the prostrate giant, for the operator himself was ere long stretched beside him and tranquilly reposing.

Norman could manage to make out, through the foliage, that the position of the dark objects on the opposite "muchan" had become more horizontal than vertical, and readily guessed how the case stood. But he yet awhile held up manfully. A pair—nay, I am sorry to say for his constancy—two pair of bright eyes looked down on him through the leaves as he ever and anon glanced at the moon and heaved something approaching a sigh. One pair had been seen recently; but it was long years—away in the old English home—since he had looked lovingly into the other with a boyish admiration for their owner. And both would perhaps be succeeded by others, in the future, on some such occasion as the present. But the summer moon was glorious, and induced sentimental reverie.

Another half-hour passed, and the moon played through the foliage in little jumps and starts of light on the faces of three slumbering Englishmen. The natives alone kept watch and ward.

"Bappoo is off to sleep too," muttered Rugonauth, as he regarded the twin place of ambush,

and saw that the partially vertical character which the native's sitting form had hitherto given it had disappeared. "The lazy villain!"

Rugonauth, now the solitary watcher in the jungle wilderness, looked at the sleeping form beside him, and thought how much the Sahib must be enjoying himself. Then he thought of his hubble-bubble. Yes, there it was, quite safe, stuck through the folds of his waistcloth. How he would like a few puffs at it! He had got his piece of cotton and flint and steel. Yes, there would be no difficulty in striking a light. A delicious whiff or two would revive him immensely, and keep him well awake, for he felt a little drowsy. But no! Its effects in both sound and smell alike forbade.

While thinking of the delight it would afford him, and how he would compensate in the morning for his present forced abstinence, his head dropped forward and was brought back again. He looked at the pool, but there was nothing there. Once more he nodded, and, this time, with a deeper droop; but from it he also recovered himself. Then after two or three rapid nods in succession his head fell forward with a jerk which almost made his neck crack; but again his sense of duty and desire for "Inam" brought it once more erect. For awhile his senses of seeing and hearing were alert; but it was

only for a minute. Intense drowsiness at last overcame him, and he coiled himself up, and was soon sleeping soundly beside his master; but with as much space between them as he could manage to place with safety to his own limbs. Of the whole ambushed party none remained awake to learn what came or went.

The repose of the Englishmen was not unrestless. The knobs in the branches on which they reclined, uneasiness of posture, and the general roughness altogether of their place of slumber prevented their enjoying it with uninterrupted soundness. Each frequently gave a turn, or made a movement to avoid some irritating stump or twig and half awoke; but never became sufficiently aroused to be conscious that no sentinel was left in the ambuscade.

It was drawing on towards dawn, when a low grunting noise some distance away scared two or three cheetul, which, after circling round, had approached the water with timorous steps.

Whether it was the near approach of the usual hour for rising, the rustling made by the cheetul in their flight, or the distant growl, which aroused the shikaree, none can tell. But certain it is, that from whatever cause, Rugonauth's gaunt figure rose from a recumbent to a sitting posture; and the experienced old man, accustomed to rely on his

sense of hearing, was at once wide awake and listening earnestly.

His gaze in the first instance fell on the pool and its bank, but it was vacant.

After remaining for some time in an attitude of fixed and wrapt attention, but without any special sight or sound attracting his senses, he ceased to look or listen so fixedly. He turned his head and gazed at the waning moon, then at the morning star just risen, and calculated by its height above the horizon the time yet wanting to dawn. He was engaged in this inquiry, when again the grunt sounded, and this time somewhat closer than before. His calculations were in a moment upset, and he put his mouth close to Norman's ear. "Sahib, Sahib, get up," he said whisperingly; at the same time shaking the sleeper by the shoulder.

"Eh! eh! what is it?" answered Norman, who however, thus suddenly roused, spoke in an undertone. "What is it, Rugonauth?" he repeated, as he sat up and stretched out his hand to grasp the rifle lying beside him.

"There is a tiger close by. I heard his voice this moment," the shikaree replied.

"Have you seen him?" Norman asked.

"No, Sahib, but he will be coming to drink. It is nearly daylight."

This brief colloquy was carried on in the lowest of whispers, as Norman assumed a convenient position and cocked his rifle.

"They all seem to be asleep on the other tree. I can't make out that any are sitting up, can you?"

"Sahib, they are all asleep. That lazy, ill-begotten rascal, Bappoo, is not keeping watch. He deserves punishment, the bad-born, duty-deserting villain!"

Afraid to call out to the sleepers, they were obliged to leave them as they were, and keep a vigilant look-out themselves.

Without uttering another word, and hardly stirring, both awaited in breathless silence the approach of the game. Some time had elapsed, when suddenly Rugonauth laid one hand on Norman's arm, and pointed with the lean, scraggy fore-finger of the other towards a bush which stood a little removed from the pool.

Norman looked and looked, but for the life of him could make out nothing; though by the shikaree's movements—as of bringing up a gun—he evidently wished him to fire.

He was just beginning to fancy he could make out the outlines of some creature in the shade of the bush—but too indistinct to admit of his firing, — when, from quite another part, an animal stalked

into the moonlight across a little bit of open ground which bordered the pool, and commenced drinking.

The noise of its lapping was quite audible, and the fore part of its form stood out prominently, well defined against the moonlit water.

Cautiously the rifle was brought to bear, and Norman pulled; then, without waiting to see the effect of the first shot, rapidly drew the second trigger also.

A tremendous roar, and the beast sprang into the air and rolled over; but almost immediately got up and dashed into the jungle.

This sudden awakening of the jungle echoes was instantaneously followed by a howl from the tree opposite. Then an ejaculation of "Halloo! what the devil!—what's the row? Where the deuce am I?"

"Can you see him?" roared Norman. "He is hard hit, he is hard hit."

"See what? What's hard hit? Hold your row, you infernal nigger. What is it all about?"

"Oh, Bopperie!" cried the native. "I thought the tiger was in the muchan. Oh, pardon, Sahib!" he continued, as certain sounds indicated that Mackenzie was cuffing the frightened Bappoo, who, suddenly awakened from pleasant dreams by the rifle crack and tiger's roar, had instantly started up

and given utterance to the howl under the impression that the tiger was on the top of him.

"It was a tiger or panther," replied Norman. "I couldn't make out which. I rolled him over, but he recovered himself and bolted into the jungle beyond your tree."

"Confound it, and this brute, Bappoo, must have been fast asleep. You were asleep, you scoundrel, you know you were," said Mackenzie, turning to the slumber-loving sentinel. "Just wait till I get down, I'll give it you."

"But what is to be done now?" asked Hawkes. "I can't see the beast anywhere."

"It will soon be dawn," replied Norman. "I suppose we must wait till it is light," and he turned to Rugonauth and consulted him on the subject.

"Yes, Sahib, we must wait," he said. "It is no good looking for the beast in the dark. It would be madness. He eat the bullets well, and is badly wounded; but we had better be quiet," continued the cautious old shikaree. "Something else may come. Will the Sahib be pleased to speak to the gentlemen in the other tree and tell them to be silent."

Norman did so, and quiet was soon restored; the whole party now remaining on the *qui-vive*. Ere long a gentle gurgling sound was wafted across to

Norman's tree, and he rightly conjectured that Mackenzie was refreshing himself after his long nap; and perhaps endeavouring to soothe the wrath which the culpable negligence of Mr. Bappoo had aroused.

Before a brief half-hour had passed a jungle cock uttered its shrill crow of welcome, as dawn opposed the declining moon. Imperceptible at first, after briefly battling with the moonlight, it triumphed over its paler antagonist, and rushed with tropical celerity over the waste of jungle. The first jungle-cock's crow was quickly caught up by numbers of others, and the jungle awoke as its feathered denizens greeted the approaching day, and seemed to enjoy its first fresh hour.

When it was fairly light, the two parties descended from their respective perches, and met over the pool. After a good shake and stretch they proceeded to examine the marks by the water's side.

A very brief inspection of the footprints showed that large clots of blood had fallen from the wounded beast. These increased in quantity as they advanced, and plainly indicated the path by which it had fled. With rifles cocked and ready they followed the track thus easily discernible, and about twenty yards further came on the dead body of a fine panther. Both bullets had taken effect behind the shoulder,

and probably cut some artery in the region of the heart, which accounted for the great quantity of blood.

"Just my ill-luck again," said Mackenzie; "but I'll have it out of that scoundrelly Bappoo," and he clutched the unfortunate fellow, who was like a mere reed in the grasp of the powerful Highlander.

The wretched creature turned almost white with fright and prayed for forgiveness. His trembling appearance was so ludicrous as to make Mackenzie burst out laughing. So after giving him a shake, as a terrier would a rat, he let him go.

Immediately he was released, the man glided to a respectful distance and made himself as small as he conveniently could.

Seeing that the danger to his comrade was at an end, Rugonauth considered it became him, and his exalted position of head shikaree, to reprimand his subordinate. Accordingly he poured forth the vials of his wrath, oblivious of his own short-comings, which he wisely and discreetly kept to himself.

"What, you call yourself a shikaree, do you?" he began, addressing the man. "Is it a shikaree's duty to go to sleep, when the Sahibs, leaving their ease and comfortable beds, come into the jungle at night for sport? You are like a fat Bunneah, oh, you wretched one, faithless to your salt! What would

have become of the spotted one, if I had been like yourself and deserted my duty? Go; it is a case of shame. You ought to conceal your face. Enough!"

Leaving the culprit to keep watch by the dead animal, the others returned to the village and thence despatched men to bring it in.

"Just catch me sitting up again," said Mackenzie, as he reclined on his bedstead enjoying the more than usually welcome cup of tea. "I declare I feel as if I had been most unmercifully thrashed all over, I am so awfully sore. There was a broken twig which stuck into my ribs all night; and, oh! how fearfully hard some of the knobs of the boughs were!"

"You managed to take it out pretty kindly, too, considering," Hawkes observed. "I confess, though, I am a trifle sore also. What a sleepless beggar that fellow Rugonauth must be, to keep awake the whole night, and after working most of the day too. Be hanged if I could have done it, if there had been any number of tigers about. I think after all 'it is hardly worth the candle.'"

"I strongly suspect old Rugonauth had his nap also," said Norman. "I have a faint indefinite sort of recollection that some one was snoring precious near me; but I cannot recall it for certain. Though I have been successful, I confess I don't think night

shooting is worth the bother. But here is Manuel with breakfast; I for one am quite ready for it. Have you boiled the eggs, Manuel?"

"Yes, sar. Here are the four yegges which Patell give for nuzzur. They not big; but in jungle plenty big yegges not get."

"Quite a treat," said Mackenzie, as he prepared to assault the articles which Manuel placed on the box. "Who is to have the fourth one? I vote we draw lots for it."

This was acceded to by the others; and bits of grass, of different lengths, were held by the proposer in his hand. The longest was carefully pulled out by Norman, who thus became entitled to the coveted delicacy.

"Mine, by Jove!" he exclaimed, as he compared his grass with the others. "Luck is with me to-day. It is a regular *dies faustus*. I am in favour with the fickle goddess, and will make her a votive offering of the shell, when I have consumed its contents. Sitting up at night is appetising work. Here goes for number one!" And, suiting the action to the word, he tapped the top of the egg, and began to peel off the shell. "Rather suspicious-looking!" he said, as he eyed it doubtfully, on completing this preliminary operation. "A decidedly bilious appearance about the white! But, courage!

it may be all right; and a little extra age won't induce me to part with it." So saying, he dipped in the spoon. "Eh! Oh, Lord! a regular knock-downer! Rotten to the last extent!" And he hurled the now objectionable article far from him.

"Well, come! that makes all square, at any rate!" growled Mackenzie. "Your goddess is only in a humbugging mood, after all. And how about the votive offering of the emptied shell, Norman? Really, you ought to have scooped out the contents, in order to fulfil your vow. Mine is a good one, I am happy to say; and so is Hawkes's."

Norman had in the meanwhile cautiously opened his second egg, which, on being submitted to a searching olfactory test, gave indubitable symptoms of its also being anything but desirable food.

"Sold! as I am a sinner!" he ejaculated with disgust, as he threw it after its companion. "The goddess is fickle with a vengeance. Just fancy my having the luck to secure the two, and those two being the bad ones!" And Norman was obliged to turn to some cold pea-fowl, amidst the derisive laughter of his comrades.

After a good nap during the heat of the day, the sportsmen arose, much refreshed, and with some slight abatement in the prominent parts of the tenderness induced by their rough night lodging.

Still, Mackenzie was lazy, and disinclined to take the trouble of going out in the afternoon in search of deer. Norman and Hawkes, however, determined to try and get a venison-steak for dinner for themselves, and, if possible, a good feed for the beaters and villagers also. So, summoning the gun-bearers, and an experienced man from the village to act as guide, and show the haunts of the game, they sallied forth in company.

They had not proceeded far, before the villager detected a herd of samber peacefully feeding on an open slope, and a brief consultation was held regarding the best plan of circumventing them. It was decided that Hawkes should stalk them, while Norman made a considerable *détour*, so as to place himself between them and the thick jungle, into which, if they once entered, it would be useless to follow. The men said that, if startled, they would probably leave the open glades in which they were grazing, and seek the denser coverts in a direction he pointed out to Norman. This, accordingly, the latter took, and soon established himself in a favourable position, trusting to their making towards him after Hawkes had got a shot. Hawkes, meanwhile, had gone to the further side of the deer, and advanced on them up wind. He had little difficulty in approaching to within about a hundred and fifty

yards, by keeping himself concealed behind the ridge on the other slope of which they were feeding. But nearer than this he saw no chance of getting. So, peeping cautiously over the low ridge, with his face and shoulders protected from observation by a bush, he sighted his rifle for the distance, and brought it to bear on a young stag, the only one in the herd.

The "thud" announced a hit, but, unfortunately, not a deadly one, for the beast only kicked up his heels and sprang forward. The startled hinds at first ran hither and thither, uncertain of the position of the enemy, and undecided, in their confusion, as to the line of escape. But this hesitation did not last long; for, led by a large old hind, who had evidently come to some determination on the subject, they dashed away from the lurking-place of the sportsman, and made straight towards Norman.

Hawkes watched them with anxious interest through his glass, as they streamed away in single file, and, after clearing the open land on which they had been feeding, entered a strip of jungle. On the other side of this, however, he soon saw them emerge, and continue their flight, though less precipitately, towards the thick jungle, just within the skirts of which he believed his friend to be waiting in ambush. After the impetuosity of their first frightened rush, the herd had fallen into a long lob-

bing gallop, which now became slackened to an easy canter. Suddenly, however, as Norman watched them, they divided into two parties, and, racing at full speed, dashed off to the right and left. In the same moment almost, a little blue puff of smoke broke from the thicket, and the wounded stag rolled over headlong. Another little puff, and the last hind of the same detachment staggered, ran a little forward, and rolled over also. This was quickly succeeded by the double crack of Norman's rifle, and Hawkes knew that a brace of samber, right and left, had fallen before his friend's unerring aim.

"Hoorah! old fellow! Well done!" he shouted, waving his cap. "A royal shot!"

"Shabash!" exclaimed the astonished villager. "Two found death in one moment. I never heard of such excellent shikar!" And the fellow was wrought to a pitch of genuine enthusiasm as he thought of the abundant meal he should, in all probability, that evening dispose of.

Though Norman was too distant to catch Hawkes's words, his shout, and the waving cap, attracted his attention as he emerged from his ambush and approached the fallen game. He answered with a wave of his hand, and then stooped to inspect the stag.

Hawkes, who had now reloaded, was on the point

of starting to join his friend and view the slain, when he observed Norman suddenly spring up, seize his second gun from the man beside him, and throw himself into a posture of readiness; while the gun-bearer crouched down in an attitude of terror behind him.

Hawkes watched for a moment, and then hastened towards him as rapidly as he could, vaguely anticipating, without being able to assign a specific reason, that his assistance was required. Long ere he reached his comrade, he heard the latter shout his name, and, answering with a halloo, ran at a pace which soon brought him to the spot where Norman, still on the alert, held guard over the dead samber.

"What is it?" he asked, as he arrived, breathless and panting with his exertions.

"A tiger, bedad! and I must have been close to him. But here, keep guard while I reload my double rifle. I think he has gone, but it is just as well to be prepared. Keep a look-out there towards that clump of korinda bushes," and he pointed to a green patch only a few yards distant from the place, whence he had shortly before emerged; and about thirty from where they then stood.

"Was he in it?" asked Hawkes.

"Yes," was Norman's reply. "Just as I got here, I heard a grunt, jumped up, and saw a great

whacking fellow trot away quietly from the midst of the korindas. I hadn't time to fire; and I am precious glad I hadn't, for I had only the single barrel to depend on, as the double was still unloaded."

"Was he lying there, do you think, or only casually passing?" asked Hawkes, still keeping a good watch over the place.

"I don't know; we'll have a look directly I have reloaded. But he must have been lying, I should say; for several times, while waiting for the samber, I fancied a tigerish scent came between the wind and my nobility."

After Norman had reloaded, with weapons on full cock, and the gun-bearers in close proximity behind, the two advanced to the clump of korinda bushes, and inspected the place.

"Yes, by Jove! Here is his form," exclaimed Norman. "We must have been close neighbours for a good quarter of an hour. I was standing behind that tree, and it is not more than fifteen yards distant." So saying the speaker pointed to a small tree on the very skirts of the jungle, about that distance off.

"I wonder he didn't hear you," remarked Hawkes.

"He was probably fast asleep," was the reply. "I took up my position from the opposite side

very quietly and cautiously, for I saw a neilghye in the jungle while I was coming round, and thought I might get a chance at it should the samber not come my way. My shots must have roused the brute, who, when he saw me in the open, decided, I suppose, on abstaining from any closer acquaintance, and moved off; for which I am uncommonly thankful."

"I saw you bowl over the samber," said Hawkes. "And, by the way, that was done right royally. Then I saw you come to the stag, and all of a sudden jump up. I couldn't make out what was the cause, but I hurried towards you, and was already on my way when you shouted."

"Ay, that was when I saw the tiger take a stare and then trot off. But let us see if we can make anything of his pug. I wish old Rugonauth was with us."

With the assistance of the natives, the two tracked the tiger for some distance; but the jungle was very thick, and as they saw no prospect of overtaking the beast, they soon relinquished the endeavour, and returned to the dead game.

Cutting off a large steak, they despatched it by one of the natives to the village, with instructions to direct its preparation for dinner, and to bring out men to carry in the rest.

Hawkes' shot, it was found, had struck in the hind-quarter, but without breaking any bone, and hence the animal was but little impeded in his flight.

The hunters after this made a detour on their return towards the village; but though they saw one herd of cheetul, were unable to get any other shot.

"I take my Davy, all the luck is with you fellows," observed Mackenzie, on being made acquainted with the afternoon's adventures. "Samber right and left after running on the top of your gun. A tiger viewed. Then the other day you had the scrimmage all to yourselves. Your confounded goddess avoids me, Norman."

"Didn't she do you a good turn with the black cobra, you ungrateful fellow?" inquired Norman. "Was there not enough of risk in that to content you?"

"Well, I forgot that little episode; but all the jolly incidents befall you. This has been a regular "dies—what-do-you-call-it—for you to-day. All my Latin has been sweated out of me long ago," Mackenzie added, parenthetically, and then continued, "You are awaked, just in time to kill the panther. Then you get the two eggs, though they were bad. Then you get into a scrape with a tiger,

and out of it all serenely ; to say nothing of having just made a successful right and left shot."

"And might not you, too, have been in the enviable position of near neighbour to a sleeping tiger, and have seen the samber foolishly rush on death, if you hadn't been so lazy ? 'Labor omnia vincit.' Bear that in mind. If you won't exert that great carcase of yours, what can you expect ? Tigers and samber are not in the habit of coming to be shot without being sought for. You must work for sport. 'Ex nihilo nihil fit.' Really I feel quite classical to-day !"

"I tell you what it is, Norman," said Mackenzie. "If you are going to make yourself disagreeable by quoting a few scraps of your school Latin, I'll talk Gaelic,—I swear I will."

"You needn't be alarmed, old fellow. I assure you I have astonished myself at my twin delivery. I don't often attempt such a thing, you will bear witness. For even if dear old Rugby's early classical training had not become somewhat obliterated, I know it would all be lost on you."

"Well, don't make any endeavour to lose it. It is so valuable, you had better keep it to yourself. I have half a mind to treat you to a Gaelic song as it is."

"Now the gods forbid !" earnestly responded

Norman. "Gaelic words, and your voice and execution, Mac, would be a combination of sounds which would turn the very beer. I know something of your pipe. 'Vox et præterea nihil.' And a most damnable bad one, too."

"Here goes," ejaculated Mackenzie, as he began to chant through his nose in the gruffest and most unmusical of voices.

"Pax, pax!" cried Norman, putting his hands to his ears.

"No Latin," was the rejoinder. "Say, peace, and apologise; and then perhaps I may postpone the rest."

"Peace, then; I freely apologise. Put some more sugar in the mug, though I fear it will be spoilt. Oh! Mac, where did you acquire such inhuman sounds?"

"Never mind. Though as far as the Gaelic words are concerned, I consider them far more human than yours. They must be so, for I spoke in a living, you in a dead language, which I hope you will carefully bury for the future."

During the evening a man came in from Mungaum, with the information that a family of tigers had taken up their quarters in one of the rivers, in some part of which they were in the daily habit of lying, and that Manajee earnestly entreated the

hunters to lose no time in coming to compass their destruction.

On this advice they determined to act ; for they had little hope of being able to do much in the country they were then in, owing to the density of the jungle : orders were therefore given for an early start on the morrow.

CHAPTER XV.

Termination of the "dour"—A family party of Tigers—An unlucky Day—A Jungle rendezvous—A lucky Day—A charging Shot—A Beater's danger—A saving Shot.

At dawn the hunters were in the saddle, their guns having been despatched some two hours previously. They had a journey of about eighteen miles, the first part of which—owing to the nature of the ground—was necessarily performed at a walk. They were able, however, to get along a little faster during the latter portion, and so reached their camp at Mungaum in good time. Bath and breakfast were barely finished, when men came in to say that two or three tigers were marked down in one place, in the bed of the river Morun—that in which the tigress had been killed. Fresh horses were accordingly saddled, and the sportsmen proceeded to the same collection of wood-cutters' huts of which mention was formerly made.

There they found Manajee full of zeal and deeply impressed with a sense of his present importance. In the absence of Rugonauth he had, of course,

undertaken the whole of the arrangements, and made the entire "bundobust."

"Sahib people," he said, elatedly, as the hunters rode up to the shade of a tree near the village and dismounted, "you shall see to-day what Shikar Manajee will show you. It will be a big day for sport this, Sahibs; I know every bush and stone, and the striped ones can't deceive me."

This was said in such a genuine tone of exultation that Mackenzie was fully persuaded the "khubber" was reliable. "Is it true," he asked, "that three tigers are marked down?"

"It is a true word, Sahib. I have seated three regular striped ones in one patch of jungle."

"Is it a large one?" was Mackenzie's next inquiry.

"No, Sahib," replied Manajee. "It is a small one of large rocks and jow in the river."

"Good, Manajee. Now we shall see if your 'bundobust' is as good for tigers as it was the other day for bears. Come along, let us lose no time."

With many and oft-repeated directions, and vehement exhortations, loudly expressed to those under his rule, Manajee gave them a taste of his authority, as he marshalled the beaters; but at the same time neglected no precaution to ensure success.

The place in which the family party had taken up their residence was not more than half-a-mile from the rendezvous, and consequently was soon reached. It was a small patch of jungle in the river bed, from about the centre of which four or five massive rocks rose high above the low jow bushes, which completely concealed their bases. What there at present was of the stream flowed alongside the jungle, and between it and a high bank. On the other side was a bank also ; and some open ground lay at the end of the cover, between it and the water. Trees were plentifully scattered about on both sides. The tigers were supposed to be enjoying their siesta in the vicinity of the rocks above referred to, perhaps in their shade and shelter. Manajee's plan was to beat the patch from the further end, after establishing the hunters on each bank commanding the open part at the opposite extremity.

Norman and Hawkes were stationed on the side overlooking the water, Mackenzie being placed on the other bank. All were in trees, as they thus obtained a better command ; though Mackenzie grumbled a good deal at having so to contract his huge limbs, as to take advantage of a fork of the tree into which he had climbed. But his maledictions, though deep, were not loud, for he feared to disturb the sleeping game by any excessive noise.

When Manajee saw that all were ready, he went round and put the beaters in motion. They entered the patch in one compact body, breaking only so much as to enable them to thread their way through the bushes.

For the first fifty yards nothing was seen, and no sound heard above the deafening noise of the tom-toms, drums, and the yelling of some half-hundred beaters. A moiety of the jungle was beaten, and the line was still advancing, when, without any warning of their presence, or being previously seen by anyone, a couple of tigers broke together from its extremity at full gallop, and just in front of Mackenzie. Though somewhat taken by surprise, he managed to discharge three barrels in rapid succession before they dashed, roaring, up the bank some distance further on, and disappeared. Norman and Hawkes also each got a longish snap shot from the other side ere they made good their retreat.

"Confound it!" ejaculated Mackenzie, "that's bad. But I hit the leading one hard, I'm certain."

At this moment, a look-out stationed in a tree in the line the tigers had taken, shouted out that one was badly wounded, and had nearly fallen as it passed under him.

Mackenzie immediately prepared to descend from his perch, and was soon in the agonies of that slip-

pery, shin-scraping, and, to a man of his weight, somewhat difficult performance. In the very middle of his exertions, when he was about half-way down, the beaters—who had ceased beating on hearing the shots—again struck up with a vigour which announced the excitement attending the view of game or knowledge of its being afoot. This caused him to pause in his descent; and cries of "Bagh! bagh!" and a loud roar, soon satisfied him that another tiger was coming on. He struggled hard to regain his position; but before he could do so, a very large tiger burst from the jungle in the track of the others, and galloped past at full speed. Instead, however, of following the example of his predecessors, and rushing up the bank, he held on in a dip in the bed of the river, hidden, except for a brief moment, from the two sportsmen on the other side.

Ere Mackenzie could re-establish himself in a posture from which he could fire, the beast had disappeared, having thus the luck to escape without a single bullet being fired at it.

"How old Mac is swearing!" said Norman to Hawkes. "And, by Jove! it is tantalising! I am really quite ashamed to meet Manajee. Fancy all three getting off in that way! I couldn't for the life of me get more than a transient glimpse of the last one's yellow fur. Could you?"

"No," replied Hawkes; "but from what I did see, he is a whopper. What's to be done now? Here come the beaters out of the jungle."

"Let us go to Mac, and consult!"

This they did; and were shortly joined by Manajee, with quite a different expression of face to that with which he had entered the jungle. The elongation of his round, bullet-like countenance intimated how crest-fallen he was at the want of success attending the beat from which he had anticipated such splendid results.

"It is a piece of very bad luck, Sahib," he said, dejectedly. "All three to get away, after being so well marked down and driven out, is strange. The hands of the Sahibs are light to-day, or some evil spirit turned aside the bullets."

"Arree, brother! not so!" said a little fellow who then joined the group. "They passed under my tree, and I saw that the Sahib had fed them well with bullets. One was wounded here, and here—" and suiting the action to the word, he placed his hand first on his bare shoulder, and then on a still more prominent part behind. "Blood was dropping."

"Is it true? Sahib, did you hit one?" asked Manajee, excitedly.

"Yes, I hit one," was the reply. "You had better

go and take up the pug, Manajee. We'll follow when I have loaded, and had a drink of water."

Beckoning to two or three of the best trackers, Manajee lost no time in doing as directed; and, having reached the spot, found indeed that there was blood on the tracks.

He was joined by the sportsmen, and the trail was followed by the little party, the beaters being ordered to keep aloof. For a couple of hundred yards the blood was sparingly sprinkled about, but after that it ceased. The ground, too, which had been pretty open, studded only with trees and little isolated thickets, now gave place to a continuous tract of jungle, and Manajee advised them at once to proceed, without loss of time, to another patch of jow in the river bed, for which he thought the tigers must have made.

This was done, and the hunters went to the further end; but although that and a cover still further on—the latter, indeed, that in which the tigress was killed—were successively beaten, no tiger was seen either by them or any of the men.

Manajee was greatly dispirited at the want of success attending these operations; and, deeming that it was useless to contend on that day with a remorseless destiny, advised the Sahibs to take no more unnecessary trouble, but return at once to

their camp. He said it was fated that nothing should be killed; so all toil would be fruitless.

The Englishmen, however, were not so profoundly impressed with the conviction of an unalterable ill-fortune, being of opinion that it often changes under the influence of determination and exertion. They decided, therefore, to go back to the place where they had left the trail, and endeavour, by following it further, to find out what had become of the missing game.

This resolution they at once proceeded to act on, and made their way by different paths through the jungle towards the spot.

Hawkes and Norman were sauntering along together, discussing their want of luck, when a shout from Mackenzie, who had struck into a different track, induced them to make the best of their way towards him.

"A brace of tigers have just moved off," he said, rather excitedly. "Manajee here seemed to sniff something, and was poking about, looking for a pug, when they got up, out of those bushes, and trotted away. I didn't see them myself; but look! here are the pugs."

Manajee, with two or three others, was already on the trail, and the hunters joined him. They continued tracking for some time; and at one place,

where the trail crossed the river, found the foot-prints still wet, and the adjacent ground yet damp from the water which had been splashed about it. They hurried on as fast as they could, and hit off the pug, but without coming up with the tigers, who, Manajee considered, were still on foot, and keeping well ahead.

As evening was falling, and there seemed no prospect of overtaking or intercepting the enemy, the hunters were induced, reluctantly, to relinquish the attempt, and return to their tents, very wearied and somewhat disheartened at their unsuccessful day.

However, there could be no doubt that several tigers were now about; and as they seemed to prefer the country about the river Morun, the hunters resolved to move their camp to a village more in its neighbourhood, and thereby save the journey to and fro. Orders were accordingly issued for a march next morning to Seitwarra, a village large enough to furnish some supplies, and distant about six miles.

Rugonauth—who had arrived from Bhilgaum, having *en route* diverged to examine a part of the country of which he had heard some report—smiled grimly as he was told of the ill success attending the day's proceedings, which he seemed inclined to

attribute, in a measure, to his absence. He would have found some difficulty in assigning any reason; indeed, when invited to do so by Manajee, was quite unable to explain why he spoke slightingly of the "bundobust," except that three tigers had escaped. This led to some interruption of the harmony with which the Shikarees had hitherto worked in concert; and, unknown to their masters, the two arranged that next day each should work on his own account, and not on any combined plan.

Next morning the tents were struck, and, after an early breakfast, the hunters, by arrangement with the Shikarees, rode leisurely to a spot between the two villages. This being in the vicinity of the river Morun, was deemed a good place at which to wait for the morning's "khubber."

It was a place they had previously several times passed and noted, being sufficiently distinguishable from the surrounding jungle to render it marked and easily found. A bare, level, open space of hard-caked mud, cracked into fissures, indicated the shallow, dried-up bed of a small pond. In the monsoon—and perhaps, in a greatly diminished degree, during a portion of the cold season also—the water may have lain to some depth, of two or three feet possibly; but now the summer heats had evaporated it, and not the slightest moisture was

left on the surface. Four or five trees, however, which stood at the edge of the dried-up mud, probably drew some sustenance from a deeper source, for they were comparatively lofty, and towered over the low jungle, thus rendering the place easily discerned, even from a distance.

At the roots of these trees were several blocks of stone, rudely shaped, so as to represent some one of the hideous image gods in which the Hindoo Pantheon is so prolific. Tailed or trunked monsters, daubed with the sacred red paint, here gave their protection to the solitary wayfarer, and shielded the humble devotee from the jungle perils.

With a few muttered words, and an obeisance or two, the natives besought their favour, and then sat down without any further notice, and made their preparations for a smoke. Pipes were produced, and small stores of tobacco disentangled from the recesses of their puggrees or waistcloths, in secluded corners of which a limited supply had been cunningly stowed away; and they smoked regardless of the proximity of their protecting images.

The fumes of tobacco, both from the above-mentioned pipes and the more refined manillas of the white faces, was wafted away into the jungle, and could be traced at a considerable distance. Two emissaries from Rugonauth, who were approaching

the place, as they thus scented the tainted air, became aware that the Sahibs were already at the rendezvous, and awaiting their arrival. This caused them to exchange their fast shuffling walk for a pace more indicative of zealous haste; and they emerged from the jungle on the other side of the pond, and broke across it at a long swinging trot. Ostentatiously panting with their exertions, they informed the smokers that a tiger had been ringed in the same jungle as that beaten the day previous, and that Rugonauth requested their immediate presence. Under their guidance the hunters soon reached the vicinity of the place in question, and, after a brief conference with Rugonauth, it was determined to beat the cover in the same manner as before. But, instead of two being stationed on the bank which had been occupied by Hawkes and Norman, the former alone on this occasion was posted there. Mackenzie and Norman agreed to stand together on foot, and hold the opposite side against all comers.

Anxiously and expectantly the hunters looked and listened as the living wedge of beaters approached the rocks in the middle of the cover. The look-outs, too, strained their eyes to catch a glimpse of the game, as the beaters stopped a little short of the rocks, and yelled with additional vigour. The

tom-toms also were whacked with more violent blows, the bushes thrashed harder with the sticks of the invading force, and more frequent volleys of stones and clods of earth hurled in front. A flower-pot likewise was lighted, and sent sputtering among the jungle at the base of the rocks; but all without effect, for no tiger responded to these delicate attentions.

After thus remaining for some time stationary, and exhausting all devices to induce the tiger to leave his probable lair, the beaters, under the directions of Rugonauth, again advanced, beat right up to and past the rocks, and then on to the end of the jungle without stirring anything.

When this was done, Rugonauth, with a few others, went back to inspect more narrowly the favourite resort among the rocks, and endeavour to ascertain what had become of the tiger.

The disappointed hunters had meanwhile exchanged their attitudes of preparation for one less ready, and rested their weapons on the ground. The beaters also, after emerging from the jungle, had ceased to shout, and in little detached parties were now earnestly engaged in discussing the bearings of the question, chattering with great volubility as they did so.

Suddenly a shout rent the air, and was heard by all above the jabbering.

"There's a tiger lying in that clump!" yelled a black object in great excitement, as he came springing towards his comrades. "I saw him with my own eyes, and he's all ready, and is wagging his tail."

As the man reached his neighbours, who huddled together on the first intimation, he pointed to a small isolated patch of jow, consisting of not more than half-a-dozen bushes, and which stood apart from the cover just beaten. It was only by accident the man had approached it, no one having thought it worth while to examine a place so unlikely to be preferred to the more concealed and shady recesses of the main jungle.

Rugonauth quickly re-appeared, and marshalling the men, took them back in a body, so as to get on the further side of the little clump, and endeavour to drive its occupant towards the hunters.

The retrograde movement was effected without the tiger moving, though he was doubtless furious at being disturbed, and quite prepared to visit his wrath on any intruders.

Having gained a sufficient distance to the rear, the beaters, in one solid body, now again advanced, and made free use of stones and fireworks.

With a tremendous roar, the tiger sprang up, leapt from the bushes which had concealed him, and dashed straight towards the advancing column. Luckily, the men remained compact and firm, waving their sticks and swords in front, and, of course, redoubling their shouts. When within some eight or ten yards, the brute, intimidated by the determined appearance of the wedge of human beings, shirked the attack, and turned aside into the jungle. Had it, however, been but a small party, or had any stray outsiders been separated from the main body, it would probably have gone hard with them. Not for a moment did the animal now loiter in the cover, but, turning back, broke from it in nearly the same place as the others had done on the previous day.

Catching a sight of the two hunters standing on the bank, he changed his direction—which was along the bed of the river—and charged right at them, tail on end, and roaring with full tiger power.

Perfectly steady, the wary hunters waited till he had passed one or two intervening bushes, and then, when he was distant from them about fifteen or twenty paces, touched their triggers, and a couple of bullets crashed into his body. He sprang into the air, stood for a moment on his hind legs, and then commenced dancing round and round. A second

A CHARGING SHOT. [P. 292.

[illegible] was stopped for ever.

"That's a settler," said Mackenzie as the two instinctively ducked when going up the final toe.

"Yes rather a neat shot altogether" was Norman's reply as he rose from his crouch and then stooped to Reggenarth that the game was begun.

"Sharp short and decidedly decisive" observed Hawkes as he turned them over the body of the stupid beauty now a still but warm bundle of [illegible] in the unaccountable combination of power and weakness common to us kind. "You shocked me awfully at first, pretty sharply. All I could see after bang went the first of the bunch was a yellow streak then a slight shock I fell over and muteness succeeded his coming. He was straight between myself and you, so that I couldn't have fired, even if I had had time."

"Ah!" said Mackenzie "If we had only been on the ground yesterday instead of being perched in these confounded trees, we should have given a better account of the family party. I wonder if this is one of yesterday's? It's odd, his returning to the same place."

While they were discussing this, one of the hunters observed that Manajee was not present, and asked what had become of him. Before Rugonauth could reply, a man stepped forward and said that Manajee had also marked down a tiger two or three hours ago.

"Then why were we not told so before?" he was asked.

"Sahib," the fellow replied. "I went to the sacred spot, where I expected to find you, but you had left. I came on the track of the horses, and arrived here while the beat was going on. It is finished; if the Sahibs please, I will guide them to Manajee."

"By Jove! we are in luck," exclaimed Mackenzie, as he rubbed his hands. "We'll make up for yesterday, I dare say. Has anything been heard of the one which was wounded yesterday?"

"It has not been seen, Sahib," was the reply, "and Manajee thinks it must have died in the jungle."

After letting the man have a drink of water, and leaving one or two to look after the dead tiger, the hunters sought the tree, in the shade of which their horses had been left; and, with the beaters in company, were soon following their guide to the place where Manajee was expecting them.

A ride of a couple of miles brought them to the neighbourhood of another river, which somewhat lower down joined the one they had left. Here they found the Shikaree, who expressed his surprise at the Sahibs being so long in coming.

When he heard, however, of the success already achieved, he was pleased to express his firm conviction that this day was destined to be an important one in matters of sport. There could be no question, he considered, that the fates on this occasion were highly propitious, and the presiding deities of the jungles favourably inclined.

Assured though he professed himself of this important circumstance, he nevertheless deplored the paucity of the beaters, as the cover was very extensive. As heretofore consisting for the most part of jow, it spread over a large area nearly level with the bed of the river, and which during the rains was probably flooded. Its extreme length may have been half a mile.

Owing to its extent, the hunters were placed in positions widely apart one from the other. Each had to guard various outlets which led to the surrounding jungle, and, at the same time, obtain as commanding a view as possible of the breaks and openings in the cover itself.

To each was assigned a tree; but Mackenzie

resolutely refused to avail himself of its advantages, declaring that he preferred taking his chance on terra firma, as he attributed the preceding day's ill-luck entirely to his being "perched up aloft, like a confounded old crow," as he expressed it. So a convenient spot on a rising ground was found for him, and there he established himself behind the trunk of a small tree, into which he made his spare gun carrier climb, and keep a look-out.

The cover was of very unequal thickness, some portions being much denser than others. As one or two of these were known to be favourite haunts, it was thought advisable to keep the men together, and beat from one to the other, instead of extending them over the whole width.

This plan soon proved successful; for from one of the first of the thickest patches, a tiger was observed by a marker to steal away. This being notified to the beaters, the line was still further contracted, and followed in the direction the animal had been seen to take.

Hawkes, who was stationed in a tree just within the confines of the cover, soon caught a sight of the tiger with his head turned towards the beaters, and evidently listening, quite unconscious of the proximity of any other danger. He levelled and fired, and the beast acknowledged the compliment by

turning and darting down the jungle towards Mackenzie in a series of tremendous bounds, at the same time giving audible signs of his dissatisfaction at the treatment he had met with.

The beaters continued on; and when they had reached the level of Hawkes' tree, he descended and joined Norman by a circuitous path. He had hardly done so, and from the bottom of Norman's tree was exchanging with his friend above a few brief inquiries, when a man was seen to advance into the jungle and move across an opening, as if to communicate with a marker in an adjacent tree.

"What is that fellow doing there, I wonder?" remarked Norman, angrily. "The man is mad. Do you see him, Hawkes?"

The words were hardly spoken, when the tiger sprang out of a thick clump of bushes, and charged straight at the man, who, apparently petrified, made no effort to escape. Indeed, there was no time to do so.

The man was, unfortunately, directly between the enraged beast and the two spectators, so that they were unable to fire; and there seemed no hope for the wretched creature.

"God of my fathers! he'll be on him in a moment," ejaculated Norman, with horror. "I must risk it,—I'll fire."

But even as he thus rapidly spoke, and suiting the action to the word brought his rifle to bear, the tiger rolled over in a heap, and a rifle crack sounded sharp and ringing.

"By Heaven! That dear old fellow, Mac, spoke there. Do you see him, Hawkes, from where you are?"

"I can see Mac," was the reply. "He has changed his place. But I can't make out the tiger: he must be down, for the man has bolted."

"Here, hold aside this bough," Norman said to his gun-bearer. "Let me see! Ah! There he is struggling. I have him now. Steady!"

It was a long, a very long shot; but the bullet sped on its way, and the wounded animal ceased to struggle. The beater, released from the numbing effects of his terror by the overthrow of the tiger, had already, with monkey-like agility, climbed into a tree. The crisis was over, and the man saved; and it mattered little whether Mackenzie's or Norman's bullet had given the death wound.

"The old trump! There he is looking quite unconcerned, and as cool as a cucumber, I bet," remarked Norman, admiringly. "Is it all right, Mac?" he shouted. "Is he finished?"

The answer was another rifle shot, succeeded by a stentorian roar. "All right, he's meat! I just fired

to make certain. A neat shot that of yours at the distance."

The three soon met over the dead animal, and exchanged notes. Rugonauth, Manajee, and the beaters also were shortly engaged in discussing the affair; and, among them, the rescued beater, gesticulating wildly, narrated his escape, with occasional interruptions and corrections from a marker in the tree near the spot, who, at the same time, was favouring another portion of the audience with his version of the story.

This, after a while, attracted Mackenzie's attention, and he called the rescued man to him.

Looking upon himself evidently quite in the light of a hero, the fellow ceased his narrative, and advanced towards the little group of sportsmen. He felt that, at that moment, he was an individual of no little importance, and the envy of his fellow-villagers, whose eyes he knew to be fixed on him. Perhaps, indeed, he had very strong hopes of "baksheesh." If this were the case, his hopes were quickly and rudely dispelled; for, directly he came within reach, Mac gave him a cuff on the side of his puggree, then seized him by the shoulders, and shook him violently.

"Ah, you baseborn!" he said; "you deserve a hearty thrashing. What made you go into the

jungle, contrary to orders, when you knew the tiger was about? You shall have no pay for this day, and not a drop of mowrah. My heart went right into my mouth," he continued, turning to his companions, "when I saw the tiger dash at him. The idiot deserves a sound hiding." And he gave the culprit a shake which almost made the teeth rattle in his head, as he remembered the disagreeable sensation he had experienced.

"Don't spare him!" said Norman. "It will be an example to the others, besides being some satisfaction for the anxiety he must have caused us all. Better tell Rugonauth that, in consequence of his disobedience of orders, he is not to be employed the next time we beat."

This was done; and Rugonauth, with the air of a judge delivering sentence, expressed his entire approval of the order, and added a few observations of his own when commenting on the circumstance. The decree was confirmed, without hope of amelioration, when it was ascertained that the man had deserted his own post, and gone towards a neighbouring look-out to borrow a pipeful of tobacco.

Manajee, too, admitted the justice of the decision, although the wrong-doer was one of his most important assistants, and a fellow-villager. His regret, however, at his friend's misdemeanor was eclipsed

by his satisfaction at the speedy death of *his* tiger, and the realization of his predictions.

"Ah! Sahib people," he said, "I told you I was a good Shikaree. How could the tigers escape? I saw a hare this morning on the proper side, and some partridges flew in the right direction. I felt sure your honours' bullets would be carried straight, and Manajee's tiger be laid this evening in front of the tents. In my opinion, yesterday's wounded one will yet be found. Luck is great to-day, and the omens favourable." And, in effect, Manajee's prediction ultimately proved correct; for, on the following day the skin and head of the beast were brought into the camp—the former, however, in such a decomposed state as to render it useless as a trophy.

That night, among the Shikarees, there was a grand carouse on the strength of the success—some mowrah, or other spirit, having been procured to supplement the limited allowance authorised by the hunters. Some samber flesh, also, dried in strips, and of an exceedingly leathery nature, served as food palatable enough to the not very fastidious tastes and digestions of the consumers. And there is reason to believe that Rugonauth and Manajee became reconciled during the course of the evening's festivities.

The hunters—who did not reach their new camp

till after dark—found the tents pitched in the shade of some tamarind trees ; a small pool of water here, also, serving as a bathing-place, though hardly large or deep enough to admit of swimming beyond a stroke or two.

CHAPTER XVI.

A proposed Visit—A native Cavalcade—The Ceremonies of the Mulakat or Visit—Arrival—Departure—Punctiliousness of native Etiquette—Anecdote in point—Another Cow killed—A dead Panther brought in—Incident in Travelling—Riding Panthers—Lions—"Riding a Pig."

FATIGUE and drink had somewhat knocked up the Shikarees, who professed themselves next day unable to mark down any game—having probably not gone out at all. Manajee, with half-a-dozen of his fellow-villagers, had followed the camp to its new ground, and taken up his residence under a neighbouring tree.

The last two had been days of rather severe work, so the hunters themselves were not reluctant to take a rest.

During the forenoon, a herald came in from some petty chieftains—Rajpoots, whose dwelling was about three or four miles away—and announced that, if convenient to the gentlemen, his masters proposed a "mulakat"—in other words—paying them a visit that afternoon. At the same time an official

brought to them a tray of sweetmeats, almonds, small raisins, and sugar-candy.

As it would have been discourteous to decline the intended honour, the hunters, though anything but relishing it, intimated the pleasure it would give them.

They were the more inclined to do the civil thing from the circumstance of its being their intention, after leaving their present place, to hunt in the neighbourhood of some villages which belonged to the chiefs, and whose good-will it was, therefore, desirable to secure.

As military men serving with their regiments—none of them having ever been employed in the civil or political departments—our hunters were not very well versed in the formalities and ceremonies attendant on the reception of native gentlemen of position, and which are deemed by the latter of so much importance. Norman had, however, on one occasion visited a friend of his, a resident, or *chargé d'affaires*, at one of the native courts, and had there acquired some slight insight into the mysteries of the etiquette usual on such an occasion as the present.

With some assistance from Sheik Hussein he was able therefore to instruct Mackenzie in the duties of his responsible position as senior of the party.

Mackenzie would willingly have waived his seniority for the occasion, and delegated to Norman the duties attached to it; but the latter would not hear of such a thing, expecting, indeed, to derive some amusement from the rough Scotchman's manner of conducting the formal and punctilious proceedings.

They had ascertained from the herald how many of the expected visitors were entitled to the recognition of chairs; it being found that three were "eligibles"—the chief himself, a brother, and a son. As but three light chairs could be mustered, it became necessary to improvise seats, so that all the party could be accommodated. A table was first proposed, but rejected in favour of a deal box, which, with a gay-coloured rug over it, formed a seat of inviting appearance. It was found, too, on inquiry, that the luxurious Sheik Hussein was in possession of a stool. This it was decided should receive the capacious form of Mackenzie, the converted box being detailed for the accommodation of Norman and Hawkes.

Everything being cleared out of Mackenzie's tent —the Bechoba—a small piece of carpet was spread, and the seats arranged; there being just room enough to contain them.

Soon after these matters were satisfactorily con-

cluded, an *avant courrier* arrived in hot haste to announce the approach of the *cortége*—somewhat unnecessarily, it must be admitted, for the dust and noise were pretty sure indications of its proximity.

First came a horse gaily caparisoned in red and yellow, bearing a pair of kettle-drums, and a rider who thumped them with an energy astonishing to witness. Next followed a small party of the retainers, several of them blowing horns and beating tom-toms; with these was a gaudily emblazoned standard. Immediately preceding the chiefs themselves, a footman ran shouting, at the very top of an unusually deep, powerful voice, all the names, titles, and dignities of his master. The chiefs themselves followed on horseback, well covered with the dust, which rose in great columns. Retainers, both horse and foot, brought up the rear and completed the cavalcade.

When they had arrived within about fifty yards of the little camp, the motley assemblage drew to either side and allowed the chiefs to pass to the front. The latter, after being assisted to dismount, and having some of the dust flicked off them by the officious body-servants, preceded by a man bearing a silver mace, advanced towards the tents with slow and solemn steps, and as much dignity as the

unwieldly proportions of the eldest one would permit.

Mackenzie and his friends met them at the tent-pegs, where hand-shaking took place, and moving inquiries after the health of each respectively were made on both sides. With an appearance of the deepest interest, the old chief learnt that the health of Mackenzie and his friends was in a generally satisfactory state.

Their anxiety on this head being relieved, and their polite inquiries duly acknowledged, Mackenzie took the hand of the senior, and thus conducting him, squeezed the portly old fellow through the door of the tent with some difficulty, and seated him in the biggest chair; a handkerchief-holder, or private adviser, or some other functionary taking his place behind it. In similar fashion, Norman having seized the paw of the brother, and Hawkes that of the son, conducted them to their seats on the other side, and then took possession of their own.

This ceremony concluded, a solemn silence ensued, shortly broken, however, by an inquiry from the visitors if the Sahibs had been successful in sport. Hearing that they had been so, they expressed their deep gratification at the circumstance. Another pause then ensued. This was terminated by Mac-

kenzie's observing that it was very hot; a self-evident fact there was no gainsaying, and which was politely assented to by the strangers. The heat of the weather naturally led Norman to remark that it caused great thirst, another fact which met with no contradiction. On this, Mackenzie thought the occasion might be improved by ordering in a little brandy-and-water, but before doing so, asked Norman in English "if these sort of coves drank brandy?"

"Well, I fancy so," was the reply. "They have awfully potent liquids of their own, I know. Fiery spirits combined with essence of quails and other strength-giving meat, and they take them freely."

The natives, of course, did not understand this brief aside, but catching the word "brandy"—a term with which they were perfectly familiar—they pricked up their ears, looked at each other meaningly, and smiled.

"Sahib," said the leader, "I will on my return send to you a bottle of liquor which we drink; it is doubtless not so good as what the Sahibs are accustomed to, but I hope it will be approved of."

"Much kindness on your part," replied Mackenzie. "Would you like to see some of ours? It is called 'brandy.' We all drink it."

"Berandy! I have heard of it," the old fellow observed. "It is dark-coloured, is it not?"

"Yes, you shall see. This is very thirsty weather. Who is waiting there? Boy!"

The servants, who were outside the tent taking a deep interest in the proceedings within, quickly replied; and Sheik Hussein making his appearance at the door, was directed to bring in a bottle of brandy and some glasses.

The bottle was brought, and its gorgeous label much admired as it was handed from one to the other of the guests, each of whom took a sniff at the contents *en passant*, evidently finding it anything but disagreeable.

"Better have a glass," said Norman. "It will do you good after your ride."

Those addressed shook their heads and smiled.

"They will suck it in like fishes, I see," observed Mackenzie; and without any more beating about the bush, he poured out some into the tumblers, which he was about to fill up with water, when he was arrested by the objections of his guests. It was soon ascertained that it was not the spirit in its natural state, but its dilution, to which they objected. Mackenzie accordingly handed to them the tumblers containing the raw spirit undiluted, and each tossed down the contents of his glass, and smacked his lips afterwards with much satisfaction.

"Well done! Shabash," cried Mackenzie. "By

Jove! Norman, we needn't have been so delicate in our advances; they were evidently on the look-out for a swizzle. I shall help myself." And so saying, he mixed himself a tumbler.

The others followed his example; but, having exhausted their stock of tumblers, were obliged to be contented with the large pewter pint-mugs, without which an Indian sportsman rarely travels.

The ice of formality being thus broken, the party got on much better; and the guests, without any great amount of urging, were prevailed on to have several more drams before they left. At their request, too, the guns were brought in and exhibited. These were examined with much interest, and a revolver belonging to Mackenzie excited especial attention. So well, indeed, were the strangers amused, that it was only after an unusually long visit that they hinted it was time to take leave.

On this, Mackenzie prepared himself for the formalities attending departure.

The chiefs had themselves taken the precaution to bring with them the requisite articles, without which the ceremony of leave-taking among people of consequence is not considered complete; for they were aware that the Sahibs were not likely to have them. An understrapper, therefore, had handed over to Sheik Hussein, a little salver, and cup con-

taining the attar and other things; and that individual now appeared, clad in his best, and bearing this tray over which was thrown a small piece of damask. Mackenzie sprinkled each guest with a little rose-water, then placed on the wristband, or some piece of cloth which represented a handkerchief, a small portion of the contents of the little cup. This was followed by distribution of little packets of spices, beetul-nut, and other ingredients folded in leaves.

When this, the ceremony of "attarpaun," was completed, the strangers rose, and were escorted, in the same manner as before, as far as the tent-pegs.

The two elders of the party were hardly so steady as they might have been, and laughed wildly when they shook hands at parting; and then, suddenly remembering their dignity, assumed a demeanour of unnatural gravity.

Expressing hopes that the gentlemen would pay their poor dwelling a visit at an early date, they mounted their horses; or rather, with the assistance of several servants, were hoisted and hustled into their gorgeously covered saddles, and rode away, as they had come, mid much discordant noise and volumes of dust.

"How particular they seem to be regarding the

performance of the ceremonious portion of the visit," said Hawkes, after they had left. "Is it always usual, that sort of thing?"

"Yes," replied Norman; "the princes of some of the petty independent states are exacting to a degree in the due performance of all the recognised formalities. When they are receiving a visit from any of the big-wig political officers, or themselves paying one, they are extremely particular in not advancing a single step further than etiquette requires; and rules on the subject are strictly laid down. As they attach so much importance to this, our political officers are also obliged to be very careful that the proper amount of respect is paid to them, and that there is no diminution in the authorised distance. I remember hearing once that a newly appointed political agent had, on one occasion, to go a certain distance to meet the Rajah of the country, and thence escort him to the residency, as the chief had announced his intention of paying the officer a visit. A certain corner of a street was the place assigned as the usual point of meeting; but the officer somehow took it into his head that he was being imposed upon, and induced to go further than the authorised distance. However that may be, when he came near the corner he resolutely refused to go even partly round it, asserting that the chief should come right

round and then be met. Each was accompanied by a large escort, and the officer by several other gentlemen also. Just round the corner the Rajah waited and waited, expecting the British functionary to make his appearance, and quite prepared to dash forward on his elephant, with smiling face and full of complimentary expressions ; but he would not budge an inch till he saw the officer. Thus they waited, each of course perfectly cognisant of the close neighbourhood of the other—indeed, portions of the escorts had mingled. The best of it was, too, that one of the agency assistants—an officer of the army—had been despatched according to etiquette to escort the Rajah all the way from his palace ; and there he was also waiting and waiting for the appearance round the corner of his own superior. At last, after a considerable lapse of time, and after several messages had passed between the native functionaries on both sides, each advanced a little, and the Rajah catching sight of the Englishman, smoothed his ruffled countenance, and came gleefully forward as if nothing unusual had occurred to interfere with his oily gladness at meeting. No verbal reference to the circumstance was made just then ; but the precise point of meeting afterwards formed the subject of considerable official correspondence.

"The same chief was said, also, to have gone to

great expense in altering a portion of his palace, in order that the passage by which he descended to the door where it was usual to receive the political officers, should be a few feet shorter, or a step or two less."

"A fool and his money are soon parted," observed Mackenzie. "I believe it is customary at some of the native courts for officers to take off their shoes, is it not, Norman? You have seen something of them."

"Yes; and it is a custom which, in my opinion, should be done away with. The uncovering of the head among Europeans answers the same purpose of respect, as denuding the feet among Orientals, and it should be accepted as conveying such. But some of these old long-descended Rajpoot families, with their traditions from remote ages, are proud as Lucifer, and cannot bear the idea of such a change."

"Are they of such ancient lineage then?" demanded Hawkes.

"Yes, many can trace back their pedigree so far, that the oldest of European families is comparatively one of quite modern date. They take especial pride in it; and there are tribes whose peculiar duty it is to keep the genealogical records and traditions and legends of the race—I mean the 'Charuns' and 'Bhats' (genealogists and minstrels). But it's time to bathe, so come along."

While they were enjoying the evening dabble, a man came running to them to say that a cow had been killed by a tiger about a couple of miles off. However, it was then too late to think of going after it; and though the hunters discussed the propriety of sitting up over the carcase, the nights being now nearly moonless, Mackenzie, without much difficulty, carried a resolution to the effect that it would be better to wait for the day.

Just as they were about to sit down to dinner, a dead panther was brought in. It had been slain by a matchlockman, who detected it in a bush close to the path on which he was walking, and fortunately killed it with a single shot.

This circumstance brought to the recollection of Norman an incident which once befell him, when a panther was killed pretty close to him without his at the time knowing anything about it.

He related that he was once travelling through a very wild part of the country with a small escort, consisting of a couple of native horsemen, as the district was infested by robbers. It was in the morning, and he had arrived within a mile or so of the village where he expected to find his tent, when his attention was attracted by the barking of some dogs on one side of the road. He then saw a small party of men, who were just in front, run towards

the barking dogs, and dodge about among the bushes. Presently, as he rode past the spot a couple of shots were fired in quick succession, close by. He thought nothing of it, imagining that the men and dogs had gone in chase of a hare, but rode on to his tent. While he was yet at breakfast, however, a panther was brought in; and on inquiry it proved that the shots he had heard fired, were at the animal itself, which had perhaps been waiting in ambush near the road for any stray cow or other animal that might come that way.

"You might have had a chance of spearing it," said Hawkes, "if you had known of its vicinity."

"I certainly might have had the chance," replied Norman, "but it is one of which I should have been rather slow to avail myself. If it had been a mere 'cheetur' (a smaller animal of the leopard tribe) I might have gone in for it. But a panther is a deuced awkward customer to tackle single-handed, with only a spear to depend upon; and few men would be fool-hardy enough to venture on it."

"No," said Mackenzie, "certainly not. I have known of men seriously mauled when riding them, even with a large party. But some fellows will do anything. I remember hearing of a lion being ridden with spears; and very severely the imprudent

riders came to grief. Bears I believe have been frequently speared."

"Your way of expressing yourself, Mackenzie," said Norman, "as, *a lion being ridden with spears*, reminds me of a story I heard once. A simple-minded clergyman, soon after his arrival in India, was proceeding to an up-country station to which he had been appointed chaplain. On his way, he was entertained with the usual Anglo-Indian hospitality, by an officer to whom he had brought a letter of introduction from a common acquaintance. The gentleman apologised for being obliged to put him into a little side room, instead of one more large and airy, in consequence of the better apartment being then occupied by a friend with a broken arm.

The clergyman, of course, expressed his regret to hear of the accident to his host's friend, and inquired how it had occurred.

"Oh!" said the host, "nothing very uncommon in this country, where the ground is so hard and stony. He broke his arm *while riding a pig*."

"Riding a pig!" repeated the clergyman with some amazement.

"Yes," was the reply. "While riding a pig, he got an ugly fall on some sheet rock."

"Am I right, Captain Jones, in understanding you to say that your friend really received so severe

an injury while riding a pig?" inquired the Padre, now thoroughly astonished.

"Certainly," the officer answered, himself wondering considerably at the clergyman's surprise at so simple a circumstance. "Certainly, I repeat, my friend got his fall in riding a fine boar."

"A fine boar!" ejaculated the parson. "Really, Captain Jones, you must excuse my astonishment, —being only so short a time in the country; but I was, till now, quite unaware that officers amused themselves by riding pigs. It seems so very odd a sport, and I should also think one very difficult of acquirement. Is it not very hard to sit them?"

Captain Jones had been opening his eyes wider and wider, as his guest thus expressed himself regarding so well-known and famed a sport as "boar-hunting;" and it was only as the parson concluded, that it occurred to him that his words had been taken literally, to mean that his injured friend had actually met with the accident while riding on a pig.

He lost no time, however, in undeceiving the innocent chaplain, who joined in the laugh which his ignorance gave rise to.

Mackenzie, on this day at dinner, produced a tin of "Highland mutton," as there was no game, and nothing but a couple of half-starved fowls to be had.

The village near which they were encamped was quite in the plain, at a considerable distance from the hills; and the country in the immediate vicinity was singularly deficient in small game,—at least Mr. Manuel so averred. He had been entrusted by Mackenzie with a gun for the purpose of bagging whatever he came across, which might be fit for the table, but returned in the evening empty-handed. He had promised Sheik Hussein a peafowl for his own private delectation, and, to render it lawful food, had taken with him a Mussulman servant to do the needful when it was shot. Disappointed in his hopes of a hearty supper, Sheik Hussein expressed himself as having no confidence in the sporting abilities of his fellow-bootlair, and broadly hinted that his ill success was attributable, more to the inexpertness of the sportsman than to any lack of game. This nearly led to a row between the worthy pair. But the old Mussulman was so impenetrably stolid, and so firmly persuaded that *he* must be in the right, that all the energetic bile and voluble protestations of the excitable Portuguese were quite lost on him. The latter was obliged at last to calm himself, without having elicited any more convincing argument than was contained in a recommendation to try bows and arrows the next time he essayed to kill game.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Scene of the Kill—Signs of the Enemy—A walking Shot—Escape after Proceedings—Again met—Singular behaviour of a Tiger—A sitting Shot—Finale—Temptation—Resistance and Non-resistance—Discussion about it—Matter amicably settled—A Dish of Pork.

An early inspection on the following morning of the scene of the kill proved that the tiger had made an excellent meal during the night, but had not lingered long in the neighbourhood after dawn. The hunters had accompanied the Shikarees in their examination of the place, and were now advised by the latter to send to the camp for their breakfast at once, and then proceed to the trees by the dried-up pond, there to await khubber; for the tiger's pugs led in that direction.

This was done, and it was yet early when, the cold meal being consumed, the sportsmen were *en route* to the jungle rendezvous. The Shikarees had gone on the track of the tiger, who was evidently in a suspicious frame of mind, and not likely to rest till he had attained some favourite thicket; for the neighbourhood of the kill was but scantily grown

over, and furnished no cover for an abiding resting-place.

The hunters had advanced some distance on their way along the village cart track—which passed near the place dedicated to the jungle deities—and were quietly jogging along with the beaters, when the whirr of a black partridge from the bed of the river, along the bank of which the road lay, attracted the attention of the two seniors. They watched the bird, thinking what a pretty shot it was, as it came flying past ; but it had hardly flown by, when a peacock also rose hurriedly a short distance further on, and with evident symptoms of having been suddenly disturbed. This was succeeded by a great noise from several other birds of the same species. Mackenzie and Norman looked at the peacock, then at each other, and pulled up their ponies, as the cries of those most unmusical birds sounded harsh and shrill in the jow-grown river bed.

Hawkes was riding a short distance a-head ; but a quiet whistle of warning from Mackenzie caused him to turn in his saddle, and, seeing his companions hurriedly dismounting, he quickly joined them.

In reply to his inquiries, they told him there was evidently something moving in the river ; and, from the noise made by the pea-fowl (who have, like the monkeys, for some reason or other a strange

antipathy to the feline race), they judged it to be a tiger.

The horse-keepers and gun-men moved quickly forward on being beckoned, and seizing their rifles, the hunters, by the advice of their guide, ran along to a bend of the river some distance a-head, and squatted down behind a few bushes ; the beaters and horses remaining where they were.

They anxiously waited, with their rifles on full cock, for several minutes, keeping a wary general look-out over the open parts of the jungle in front, and especially on the road which there crossed the river. Suddenly again a partridge rose, but dropped after flying a few yards. Another performed a similar manœuvre, and our sportsmen now felt convinced that something must be on the move.

"By the powers, there he is!" whispered Norman ; "but I can't quite make him out."

"Where ?—where ?" the others rapidly inquired, in a cautious tone of voice.

"There, near the road, on the other side. I saw him move. He must be looking to see if all is clear."

Even as Norman spoke, a fine tiger stalked quietly and majestically from the jungle on to the open road, and in another second would have been across, when the concealed battery opened upon him.

There was short time for aiming, but prepared for the place of his appearance, the sportsmen were able to get each a hurried snap shot; and the beast acknowledged the salute with a roar and a tremendous bound, which instantly carried him out of sight, in the jungle on the other side of the road.

"A hit!" exclaimed Mackenzie.

"Decidedly; I caught the thud," responded Norman. "But one bullet at least was wide; it kicked up the dust well behind him."

"I wonder if he would have taken a fancy to either of our tattoos," said Hawkes. "If we had continued along the road, we should just about have given him a favourable opportunity of taking his choice."

"There is no answering for his tastes and appetites," replied Mackenzie. "Though he had such a good dinner last night—if it is our friend of the kill—he might still have a corner left for a bit of pony. But come along, if you fellows have loaded; we ought to try and intercept him again."

While these observations were being made, reloading had been in full operation; and when completed, the three, with an equal number of natives, crossed the river by the road and then continued along the bank on that side.

By keeping on the chord of the arc, formed by

another bend of the river, they hoped to reach a favourable spot to command its bed lower down, before the tiger should have time to pass it. Arrived at the place in question, they waited in concealment for some time, but without seeing anything more of the animal. Shortly their attention was attracted to a small knot of men up the stream, and these they made out to be Rugonauth and the other Shikarees on the old track of the tiger. They were soon, however, seen to leave the trail, and go towards the place where the beaters and ponies had been left, probably having been warned of what had occurred. They were next seen to cross the road, and pull up dead at the spot where the tiger had passed. A very brief examination seemed to satisfy them. They then continued on the track of the sportsmen, whom they soon joined in their place of ambush.

They were quickly in possession of the facts of the case; and on learning that the tiger was undoubtedly wounded, and was believed not to have passed the place at present occupied, Rugonauth's measures were promptly taken.

He knew that the beast had not left the river on the side on which they now were, between them and the road, or he should have found the pug when following the trail of the hunters. Dividing his

party, therefore, he directed Manajee to go back by the road to the other side, and thence move down the river bank, while he himself crossed directly over a little lower down. He would thus be able to ascertain for certain whether the tiger had stolen away before the hunters reached their present position, or unobserved since they had done so. The two Shikarees would then work on towards each other, till the ring was completed of that section of the river.

No time was lost in executing this movement, and Rugonauth shortly re-appeared on the other side without having discovered any sign of the tiger's escape below. He then continued working up towards Manajee, carefully examining the ground at each step. A shrill whistle from the latter arrested him, however, before he had proceeded far; and both he and the hunters shortly responded to the signal by joining the cautious Shikaree.

It was then found that the tiger had sneaked away up a dry watercourse filled with jungle, and which there joined the river at right angles.

After a brief investigation, and the exchange of a few words with Manajee and one or two of the other local Shikarees, Rugonauth informed his masters that the tiger had in all probability made for an isolated

hill, or rather series of small knolls, which, in parts thickly covered with jungle, rose abruptly from the plain about half a mile off, and of which the water-course was a drainer. There was no thick jungle between the river and the hill; at least, not of sufficient extent to tempt the beast to remain, with so favourite a cover within reach. So, after directing the beaters to go to one end, the party moved towards the hill in question.

The ground consisted of a main back-bone, or ridge, with a series of stony knolls on both sides; the whole apparently tossed abruptly out of the plain by some wild convulsive freak of nature, and quite isolated from any range of hills. It extended for about a mile in length, with a width at the greatest part of some three or four hundred yards.

About mid-way between the two ends, the slopes were bare of undergrowth, but with numerous small trees scattered over them. This was the part selected to be held by the gunners, the half to their rear being but thinly wooded, while that to which the beaters had gone was thickly covered. Hawkes was stationed near the top of the ridge, the other two being lower down, one on either slope. Mackenzie was persuaded to follow the example of his two friends, and get into a tree.

Almost immediately succeeding the first distant burst of beater-music, Norman, on his side, saw a yellow tawny mass top a slope a long way off, and descend it at a canter straight in his direction. It was, however, soon lost to view. Anxiously he kept his gaze wandering over the intervening ground, carefully scanning each knoll and slope, but without discovering the object of his interest, till suddenly—and in that place quite unexpectedly—a tiger deliberately walked into the plain at the foot of the hills, and began to stare about him.

The distance was about two hundred yards; and, thinking the animal was deliberating about breaking right away across the plain, or that he would shortly be hidden by the next knoll, Norman changed the double rifle which he held in his hand for his pet single, and determined to risk a long shot. But before he had covered it, the tiger—perhaps dreading to expose himself on the plain, or for some other feline reason—suddenly changed his course, and, to Norman's astonishment, came quietly on, straight towards its lurking enemy.

Seeing this, the hunter reserved his fire for closer quarters; but as, when within about a hundred yards, it showed an inclination to resume the former direction of its flight, he hesitated no longer, but delivered his shot.

With a low roar, the tiger broke from a walk into a gallop, and tried to charge up the hill. It was evident to the sportsman that it was suffering great distress from its continued exertion during the heat of the day, and, very likely, from its wounds also. Before it reached the tree, gasping for breath, its pace had again subsided into a walk, but it pertinaciously continued still to advance towards Norman. The double gun had replaced the single rifle in his hands, and, as the tiger approached, he fired his right barrel, expecting to see the beast roll over. But it neither acknowledged the civility by a roar, by turning from its line, accelerating its pace, or in any other way. Without taking the slightest notice of the occupants of the tree, directly under whom it passed, it continued a little further on, and then sat on its hams like a cat, as if completely unaware of their vicinity.

Possibly it might have been merely waiting to catch some sound by which to ascertain the exact situation of its adversaries, but more likely it was so exhausted as to be unable to proceed any further without resting, and, in its flurried state, incapable of detecting where its danger lay. Norman had been unable to fire at it as it passed underneath, owing to the thickness of some foliage which concealed it from him; but he now screwed himself

round, and deliberately aiming at the spot where the elbow touches the side, fired, and the beast, without a groan, dropped perfectly motionless to the shot.

The other hunters had not been aware of the tiger's being on foot till Norman's shots warned them to be on the alert; and as his position was undiscernible from theirs, his death-whoop was the first intimation they had of the termination of the brief encounter, and it soon brought them to the spot.

"That is about the queerest tiger I ever saw," said Norman, as he reloaded, after descending from his tree. And then he detailed the circumstances of the beast charging up the hill straight towards his tree; then, without appearing to take the least notice of him, pass on, and utterly regardless of his vicinity, deliberately squat down in the very front of danger.

"He must have got the staggers, I should think," said Mackenzie. "He has been rattled about enough after his hearty meal last night, to interfere considerably with his digestion. Don't you think he saw you?"

"Hardly, I should say," was the reply. "He certainly charged straight for the tree, and of course I expected some sign of recognition; but he quietly

walked underneath, and then pulled up, as I have told you."

"Queer beast, certainly! He must have been utterly exhausted. By all tiger right, he ought to have been as savage as—as —as—a tiger," Mackenzie added, at a loss for a word more fitted to convey the idea of pugnacious irritability.

While thus speaking, they had been engaged in examining the body.

"This must be the wound he got in the river," said Norman, pointing to one in the ribs. "He has been licking it. But there is only one."

"There are only two others," said Mackenzie; "so you must have missed just now with one of your shots."

"Then it must have been with my second, when the beast was within ten yards; for I'm certain my first told."

"No," remarked Hawkes. "Here is a regular bit cut clean out of his tail. You took a good line, Norman, but shot high. It must be yours, for it has evidently been fired from the front."

"A muffish shot, and no mistake," Norman said. "But——"

"Dookur! dookur!" (pig! pig!) here cried out several of the beaters, who, having heard of the death, were making the best of their way to the

spot. "There, Sahibs, there they are, just below you!"

Abruptly breaking off, each hunter had instinctively seized his weapon, and brought it to the "ready;" and now, as they all looked in the direction indicated, saw a nice sounder of half-grown pig getting very creditably over the ground, about fifty yards below the place on which they stood. They were rattling along close together, and presented certainly an exceedingly tempting shot.

"There's no riding them here!" muttered Mackenzie, hurriedly. "Yes, hanged if I don't!" he added, as the sight proved irresistible. And suiting the action to the word, he let drive right and left, and was immediately followed by Hawkes doing the same.

Norman clutched his rifle with a firmer grip, as he looked wistfully at the pig defiling so temptingly before him. But, no! For the Secretary of the Jehangeer Hunt to *shoot* a pig!—to take so dirty an advantage of what was only born to be speared!—Never! Though food were still more wanting in camp, never should it be said that the Secretary of that renowned Hunt had committed so unjust a deed! Pig-murder—Never! *Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum!* Strengthened by this appropriate quota-

tion, he resolutely resisted his not unnatural inclination to fire, and "ordered" his weapon with stern determination.

"Hoora! one's down!" shouted Hawkes; "and there is another hard hit. Come along!" And getting hold of a second gun, he ran after one which showed symptoms of distress, as it lagged behind its fellows, now disappearing over a slope. "Come along! it can't go far!"

Mackenzie ran off with his young companion. Norman hesitated for one moment. "The beast is wounded; it should be put out of its pain!" he ejaculated, and then started after his comrades. Fleet of foot, he soon outstripped them; and on gaining the top of the acclivity over which the wounded pig had disappeared, he detected it standing in a hollow below. Pulling up, and rapidly aiming, he fired; and the porker was in the next moment on his back, kicking.

"His porcine spirit has fled from its frail tenement, as the newspapers say," observed Hawkes, who was not long in joining his friend over the now motionless pig.

"Hoora!" shouted Mackenzie, as he came up, blowing like a grampus. "There will be something like food now."

"Ah, Mac! how could you?" said Norman,

eyeing the last comer reproachfully. "An old pig-sticker like you!"

"How could I?" repeated the Scotchman, with some faint show of embarrassment. "How could I, said you? Why, hang it, man! meat is meat!"

This was indisputable; so Norman made no effort to attack that proposition, but he said, "And couldn't you resist killing a poor little pig, because you have had less than a week's course of tough goat and stringy fowls? To shoot a pig! As bad, every bit, as vulpicide in England!"

"Ay! ay! but we shoot them in the Highlands, where they can't be ridden; and this is just the same case. We couldn't ride them here in this jungle," observed the porcicide, apologetically. "Besides, we want meat for the camp."

"The brand of pig-slayer will cleave unto you," said Norman. "And only fancy your setting Hawkes so bad an example! Really, Mac, I am quite ashamed of you."

"And who, I should like to know, polished off this fat little chap?" responded the Scotchman, as he cunningly shifted his tactics. "Come, it's all very fine your pitching into me; but you went off with far more alacrity than myself to get the finishing shot."

"Yes," chimed in Hawkes, who felt himself bound

to support his partner in guilt ; "you gave us both the go-by in your anxiety to administer the *coup-de-grace.*"

"Yes ; that is just it," was the reply. "I felt obliged to finish it. If you fellows had only killed it outright, I wouldn't have touched a trigger at them. I wanted to put it out of its misery, as it was wounded."

"Oh ! ay ! of course," Mackenzie retorted ; "pure tender-heartedness on your part. However, you can't deny that you did drive a bullet into it. There is no getting over that fact."

And with this triumphant remark, the Scotchman chuckled at the idea of the crack hog-hunter of the district being concerned in the *shooting* of a pig—a sporting crime, in a country feasible for hunting, it is unnecessary to remark, of no little magnitude.

Norman shuddered at the idea.

"Why, hang it !" he said, "did I fire when they passed so temptingly before me ? I only just finished what you fellows had so muffishly begun."

"No valid reason. Hawkes or I would have finished it. No, the fact is, you couldn't resist your bloodthirsty nature. Your murderous propensities overcame you."

"Why, what a calumny !" Norman exclaimed.

"I not only checked all desire to fire when they passed, but did not even aim at them."

"Ay! but then you wished to," said Hawkes. "You say you 'checked all desire to fire,' so you must have had some desire. It's all the same thing; for if evil wishes damn equally with evil acts, you are in the same boat as ourselves—whichever way you put it—so you had better not pitch into us any more."

Norman laughed at the casuistical reasoning of his young companion; and though he would not admit any culpability on his part in the affair, was obliged to sign a truce.

"Well, I won't impeach you this time," he said, "I will for once overlook the grave offence; but, remember, only on this occasion. I won't have the hunt rules broken, even out here."

"You'll be precious glad at dinner-time that we have been less strict than yourself," Mackenzie said. "I declare the idea of the chops makes me feel quite hungry. Just see in what capital condition this little beast is, considering the season."

A compromise being thus established, no great amount of remorse was afterwards expressed by any one of the party at the deed which had so seasonably supplied the camp larder. As for old Rugonauth, when he arrived on the scene

of action, his congratulations were unmistakably sincere.

"Very good, Sahibs,—very good!" he said, chuckling gleefully. "There will be good meat for the gentlemen's dinner to-day. There is plenty of good flesh on these pig," and he gloated over the animal he was already engaged in disemboweling, and otherwise rendering fit for transit to the tents. Manajee was in the meantime similarly employed on the other. When prepared, they were hung on boughs, and, with the tiger, conveyed to camp.

To Manuel was assigned the duty of choosing and preparing the most delicate portions for the table; and one or two jokes passed between that person and his young friend Baloo, at the expense of old Sheik Hussein.

Imbued with the orthodox Mussulman aversion, he had expressed his disgust by spitting on the ground when the unclean animals were first brought in. Disdaining to appear to take the slightest interest in the cutting up—which appeared to afford unlimited gratification to his pork-eating fellows, and the many loquacious on-lookers,—he removed himself to a distance, and pondered on the depraved and heterodox tastes of the misguided lovers of the forbidden meat. He was not so far away, however, as to be entirely ignorant of the nature of the jokes

which were freely indulged in. A dignified contempt kept him silent; but not on that account was he wrathless. It required but a touch to arouse the smouldering embers of his anger and make them break forth in flame. He passively bore, for some time, all the hard things he heard said of his creed and its restrictive laws on the subject of pork, but he was at last excited to active demonstration by Mr. Baloo.

That person, who was of no caste or religion in particular, had been among those most interested in the dismemberment of the pigs; and he now had occasion to pass near Sheik Hussein with a dish of the raw meat. He took this opportunity of remarking to another servant, in a tone of voice which he knew must reach the Mussulman, that it was a great pity the Koran prohibited pork, as he felt certain Sheik Hussein would like it.

This was too much for that worthy man. He jumped up and ran—or, to speak more correctly, trotted, for he was corpulent and not much given to running—towards the delinquent, with the object of inflicting summary personal chastisement.

"You heretic!—you ill-begotten!—you base-born!" he shouted, brandishing a frying-pan he had seized on as the first available weapon. "I'll teach you to speak so disrespectfully."

He snorted with rage, and his thin moustache stuck out like the hair on the back of an angry cat, as he aimed a blow at Baloo ; but that agile youth was perfectly prepared. He put down the plate of meat on a box, avoided the blow, and then dodging round the box, ran off laughing.

Sheik Hussein, however, unable at once to check both the violence of his onset, and the impetus given by the missing of his blow, struck his shin against the edge of the box, fell sprawling over it, and on to the dish of meat which Baloo had just deposited there.

He recovered himself with some difficulty, and when he saw with what he had been in contact, and the pollution his person had undergone, started off in a frenzy of rage. He commenced tearing off his long frock-like apparel ; but suddenly calming himself, as he saw the impossibility of taking present vengeance on his active enemy, walked away with as much stateliness as he could on the moment assume, to cleanse himself from the pollution he had undergone.

Baloo, however, for some time took especial care not to come within reach of the enraged old fellow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A native Letter—Its Contents—The Reply—Black Partridges—A Visit to the Chiefs—Description of the Dwelling—Native Liquor—Nautching—Manajee's Farewell.

On the Monday, the shikarees were unable to find the fresh tracks of any tiger, so the sportsmen determined again to move their camp, and by night, for on the last occasion all had suffered severely from the day march. Among other circumstances, one of the terriers had been brought in on a man's head, more dead than alive; and one or two of the fowls had died on the road in their basket.

During the day, a messenger came in from the chiefs, and, after application to the servants, was introduced to the presence of the hunters. Carrying in his hand a long iron-shod staff—an emblem of his position as an Hurkara—gaily trimmed with a woollen tuft of variegated colours, he advanced salaaming, and unfolding a piece of cloth he carried, produced, with every appearance of reverence and respect, a small flat muslin bag. This he presented

to Mackenzie, and then retired to a little distance, and was shortly dismissed to refresh himself. The muslin cover was about the size of the usual official envelope; and through its flimsy texture could be discerned the flowered silk of the covering containing the "khureeta," or letter. This was tied at the mouth with several twists of red silk thread, the ends of which were passed through a waxen seal. And such a seal! Round, and having a diameter of about three inches, with a uniform thickness of perhaps a third of an inch, it may have contained, say, three or four sticks of ordinary sealing-wax. On its face was impressed a number of native characters with many flourishes, all firm and well defined. The silk being cut, the usual native letter from one person of consequence to another of similar rank, was extracted. Folded with great precision, it was written in a flourishing Persian character, in the Hindustanee language, on soft glazed paper, which glittered with the particles of gold-leaf used in its manufacture.

Norman—who had passed as an interpreter—with some assistance from Sheik Hussein, managed after several trials to make out the general purport of the document; and in this he was somewhat aided also by the fact of its contents having been communicated by the Hurkara to Sheik Hussein.

It commenced by stating, in high-flown terms of great praise and politeness, that it was addressed to a Sahib whose name it was for some time exceedingly difficult to ascertain. However, as it began with something which looked like "Mug," and the remainder might be fairly taken to represent "unjee," both being preceded by "Kuptun," it was assumed that "Mugunjee" stood in lieu of Mackenzie's name. Some queer liberties were taken with the names of the others also, but being simpler, they escaped with less alteration; "Noman" and "Hok" being sufficiently approximate to be readily understood.

After the preliminary string of complimentary expressions was exhausted, it made particular and earnest inquiries after the health of those to whom it was addressed. It then set forth that, knowing the gentlemen were great hunters, the writer had sent men out to look for tigers in his neighbourhood; that the information was favourable, and that the best shikaree of the place had been sent to report to the Sahibs. It went on to state that it was earnestly hoped the gentlemen would fill the hearts of their friends with delight by appointing a day for a meeting, and that so auspiciously commenced a friendship might last between them for ever. Invoking all manner of blessings, it concluded

with an intimation that to write more would be beyond the limits of respect.

Sheik Hussein, though evidently longing to try his hand, confessed that he was hardly equal to the important duty of answering this missive in the complimentary strain necessary. He was, moreover, unacquainted with the titles, style, and formula of address appertaining to the rank of the person written to—a most important matter. After a brief discussion, therefore, it was decided to send a reply in English, as the best and easiest way of overcoming native epistolary difficulties.

As there was not a creature within seventy or eighty miles but themselves and Manuel who could read it when written, it may at first sight appear to have been a somewhat useless expenditure of time and trouble. But as a full verbal explanation of the principal items of its contents was to be given to the bearer, it was hoped they would be sufficiently understood for all necessary purposes. Mackenzie undertook to write the letter, his friends sitting in committee with him as counsellors and assistants.

There was a little difficulty at first as to the most pleasing form of address; but this was quickly overcome by Norman suggesting the adoption of the commencement of Othello's famous speech.

"Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors," was, therefore, the form employed. Then followed a string of the most elaborate compliments which occurred to either member of the committee, free use being made of bulbuls, roses, streams of delight, &c. The body of the letter came next, stating that the writer proposed visiting his heart-delight-giving and most illustrious friends on the morrow. It concluded in a style presenting an agreeable contrast to the commencement, an approximation to the diplomatic form being here considered the most natural and expressive. "Accept, most illustrious and world-famous chief, the assurances of the very summit of my respect and the extremest altitude of my most distinguished consideration." The missive was signed "Donald Mackenzie, of that ilk."

"That's a pretty and effective little piece of composition, I think," said Mackenzie, as he eyed their joint work with much satisfaction. "If ever the chief shows it to any passing English traveller, I flatter myself it will be appreciated."

"I hope it will be preserved among the family archives," observed Norman. "It would be a highly satisfactory document to be perused by some descendant yet unborn of cultivated mind and English linguistic attainments."

"It would be a nice little study, too, for translation into Hindustance," Hawkes said.

When placed in an envelope, on which a bold flourishing superscription was written, it looked, the senders thought, worthy of its destination. It was entrusted to the care of the "Hurkara," who received it with much respect, carefully wrapped it in the cloth he had brought, and then backed out of the tent with his face to the hunters. As the safest place in which to bestow so important a document, he tied it into a fold of his puggree, and then started off at a long trot, deeming no time should be lost in placing in his master's hands a missive of such interest.

By dawn the next day, the hunters were on the move, having arranged to accompany the shikarees in their examination of the country towards the new camping-ground. A small body of beaters also accompanied them on the chance of being employed, having, in fact, remained with the camp ever since it had been in the neighbourhood of their homes.

The country was carefully examined, but no fresh trail was found. But numerous black partridges had been calling during the early morning in and about the jow in the river's bed. The "chuck-chuck, chuck-a-chuck," of that very handsome bird

is a crow both shrill and clear, and audible at a considerable distance. As there appeared to be no chance of finding a tiger, the hunters spent an hour or so in a beat for them, and succeeded in bagging several brace. They were then guided to the cart track, which led to the village near which their new camp was pitched, and cantered off, leaving the men to follow more leisurely.

About four o'clock they were again astir, with the object of fulfilling their promise of visiting the chiefs, who lived about two miles off. Arraying themselves in the least stained of their shooting-jackets, and, in the cases of Mackenzie and Norman, discarding their leggings and assuming the more conventional trowser of civilisation, they started under the guidance of a messenger who had been deputed by the chiefs to attend them. Another functionary or two of greater importance met them at the entrance to the village, and escorted them to the gateway of the small fort, which, situated on high ground at one end, had a fair command of the village itself and of the surrounding country. It was a rectangular pile of buildings, with an open quadrangle in the centre. Flanked by rounded bastions at the corners, the connecting curtains presented a bare uninteresting appearance, except where a line of gaping slits broke its dull monotony.

These were openings through which the defenders could pour their matchlocks' fire, and which commanded the ditch at the base of the wall. The latter had, however, in many parts now become filled up.

Within the walls, in many parts, the interior buildings had, by successive additions, risen high above the original face, and gave freedom of air and vision to the inhabitants.

Built at a time when every man's hand was against his neighbour's, and when an attack from rivals or robbers might at any hour be apprehended, the means of defence were more studied in its construction than any principle of æsthetics.

Near the only entrance was assembled the principal portion of the village population, who for the most part civilly salaamed as the Englishmen rode past. At the gate itself they were met by a functionary of greater rank, and by him conducted through the gateway and across the quadrangle to a door in the principal pile of buildings at the further end. The other sides were occupied by ranges of low sheds reared against the fort walls, and opening into the quadrangle, many of them being used as stables.

At the door they were met by the chiefs in person, who, after the usual polite inquiries, led them by the hand up flights of steps, and through

narrow passages until they gained an upper room above the fort walls, and commanding an extensive prospect of the adjacent country. The new comers were not sorry to exchange the stifling atmosphere and unpleasant odours through which they had passed for the comparative freshness of this upper region. Chairs were here arranged, and they took their seats in the same order as on the former occasion; that is to say, the hosts were on one side and the guests on the other, several of the household standing behind and around.

The health inquiries exhausted, the chief explained how rejoiced was his heart at the meeting. Mackenzie then thanked his host for making inquiries about the game in the neighbourhood. The chief assured him that he and all his people were much at the service of the Sahibs; and proposed, or rather hinted, that he himself should accompany them in their beat on the morrow.

The hunters, however, had no idea of being hampered in any such way. They well knew that sport was not likely to be enjoyed, or any order kept, with a lot of tag-rag and bobtail, such as would certainly accompany their masters. Little encouragement was therefore given to these hints, which were made out of mere politeness, as no doubt the proposers themselves would have been

greatly embarrassed by the acceptance of their courteous offer of joining their friends in the field.

Some observations on the subject of the view from the window were interrupted by the entrance of attendants with a bottle and glasses.

"I have not, Sahibs, got any spirit like your 'berandy,'" said the senior of the party. "All I have to offer is this. It is very strengthening though, and it gladdens our hearts here in this jungle country. I hope the Sahibs will find it good."

"Without doubt," said Norman, politely, as he observed Mackenzie sniffing doubtfully and suspiciously at the glass which had been poured out for him.

"I say, Norman," he inquired, "is it right to taste it before they do? It smells uncommonly queer."

"Don't know a bit," was the reply. "If they hesitate about drinking, set the example and drink yours at once."

Mackenzie followed this advice; and when he saw the hosts supplied, took a gentle sip. Norman did likewise, and both had some difficulty in swallowing what little they took. Hawkes, more confiding or less experienced, boldly swallowed a full gulp, and immediately began to cough and sputter.

"It is fire," he exclaimed, as soon as he could speak. "Oh! how it burns. I never tasted anything so hot and utterly damnable in my life. Brandy and cayenne-pepper is a joke to it."

"The young Sahib finds it strong?" said the old chief interrogatively, after tossing down his glassful without much apparent inconvenience.

"Yes, it is rather strong," said Norman. "I think it is too much for me after riding in the sun." Saying thus, he put down his glass—an example quickly followed by Mackenzie.

"Their throats and stomachs must be made of cast-iron," the latter said. "They never even winked as they took it."

The chiefs were profuse in their regrets that the liquor was not to the taste of their guests, and urged them to try it again; but this they declined to do, and the entrance of a couple of nautch girls enabled them to change the subject.

Attended by three musicians behind them, the girls took up a position at the end of the room opposite the party seated. Again, however, the chief entreated Mackenzie to imbibe of the potent spirit.

"There was doubt in my heart," he said, "that you would not find it so pleasant as your 'berandy.' But my hope is that you will take a little more.

It is most nourishing. See, I will have yet another glass in honour of the Sahibs. Very warm and heart-rejoicing it is," he added, after finishing a second glass. "Give joy to my heart by taking some more."

Thus entreated, poor Mac, with a wry face, again applied himself to the unpalatable liquor, and took another sip; but by a dexterous manœuvre managed to upset the greater part on to his pocket-handkerchief.

The preliminary tuning up of the instruments and the trial notes of the girls having been now satisfactorily completed, the host asked his guests if it was their pleasure to witness the performance. Receiving an answer in the affirmative, he gave a sign, and the nautch commenced.

One girl first led off and advanced to the front; then having retreated, the other came forward and in like manner resumed her place. This was done to the strains of music issuing from a small one-sided drum—which was fixed in the waistcloth and beaten with the fingers—and two string instruments, something between a fiddle and a banjo, of the nature of both of which they in a measure partook.

To western ideas, conversant with waltz and galop, the nautch appears very tame. The performers glided along in a monotonous way, jingling

the little silver bells attached to their anklets, as they kept time to the music, by bringing their ankles together or by a pat of toe or heel causing them to tinkle. Their voluminous dresses, white, with coloured borders, fell in numberless plaited folds to within a few inches of the feet, completely eclipsing in amplitude of skirt, when expanded, the most extensive dress that was ever mounted on crinoline; gathered in a little under the bosom the lower folds of the dress were so arranged that they could be taken in the hand and waved about, the weight and extent of the drapery below permitting this without exposing any more of the coloured trousers, which fitted in wrinkles tight to the ankle. A scarf of red and gold depending from the head was wound loosely over the dress, and the adornment was completed by huge golden rings, some inserted through the cartilage of the nose and ears, and others fixed on the fingers and toes.

After dancing for awhile singly, the two girls joined company. Occasionally by rapid twirls the skirts of the dress were expanded, and taking an end between the fingers they would weave them about with undulating movements of the arms.

The evolutions, though not ungraceful, were stiff, constrained, and monotonous, and mostly performed with the body rigidly erect. There is no spright-

liness in the movement of the feet either, it being considered a great point to glide along without the faintest symptom of springiness.

The singing was not more to the taste of the English auditors than the dancing. Pitched at the very highest key, it appeared that the principal object of the performers was to make their voices shriek and quiver with all their force of lung; and in this they were remarkably successful. Some of the native airs, when set to English music, are pretty enough, but, heard in the original, convey but little idea of melody. Moreover, it requires one to be practised, as well as thoroughly conversant with the language, to enable the listener to catch the burden of the song. But as this is frequently immoral, sometimes indecent, the interest attaching to the words, even when understood, makes no amends for the lack of melody. In fact, a little of it is generally found to go a long way among men whose tastes have not become assimilated to those of the natives.

On this occasion, Norman managed to make out that a great deal of the singing was a sort of chaunt in honour of the visitors; but this did not prove sufficiently attractive to induce them to prolong their visit. Mackenzie, therefore, took an early opportunity of intimating that, as the sun was

sinking, it was time for them to be moving homewards.

On this hint the nautch was stopped, and, after salaaming, the performers left. As they retired, the light from the door-way fell on a perforated screen at the side of the room, and Norman caught sight of what Hawkes had for some time been in close observation.

Behind this screen—a piece of carved stone-work let into the wall—Hawkes had fancied he could dimly discern the outlines of several female figures flitting to-and-fro ; and on one occasion a suppressed giggle—such as is only producible by the fairer half of humanity—had confirmed him in his conjecture.

Examining the spot with a deeper interest and a more curious gaze, he felt persuaded that he detected the flashing glance of a dark eye and the shape of a female head ; and he smiled as he bowed towards it. Again he thought he detected a low laugh ; but, if this were the case, he found no opportunity of satisfying himself as to the personal appearance of its possessor.

The uttur-pan was brought in, and, the usual ceremonies concluded, the guests were conducted as before, and, after taking leave of their hosts at the foot of the building, rode away.

Hawkes had, it is true, looked narrowly at the

grating as he left the room, and, I am sorry to say, on the supposition that some one was there, violently winked his eye. Possibly it may have reached some old harridan—the zenanah attendant; possibly some blooming, fair Rajpoot girl, longing for freedom and an intrigue; possibly it fell dead on the unimpressionable stone: but which, it was not destined he should ever learn.

After being escorted as before through the village, the hunters galloped off to their tents.

The village at which their camp was pitched also belonged to the chief, who possessed a "Jagheer," or estate, of considerable extent. Sheik Hussein informed them, with much importance, that a sheep, some bottles of liquor, and several trays of sweetmeats, had been sent for their acceptance; and that orders had been issued that grass, wood, and milk should be furnished free during their stay at any villages acknowledging the chief as their lord.

The sheep, liquor, and sweetmeats were, as etiquette required, accepted; but the sportsmen issued strict injunctions that everything received from the villagers should be paid for, being well aware that, too often, a good portion of the loss falls on the villager who brings the supplies.

However, a polite message was returned; and, —what, perhaps, was more acceptable—a couple of

bottles of brandy sent by the domestic who had brought the gifts.

They had now advanced into a portion of the country beyond the limits of that known to Manajee and his friends; and being far from their homes, they requested permission to take leave and return.

This was announced to the hunters as they sat outside, smoking after dinner.

"Let them come," said Mackenzie to Sheik Hussein, "and bring some native matchlock powder and a bottle of the liquor just sent us."

Hereupon, Manajee—who, with ten or a dozen of his fellow-villagers, was waiting at a short distance—advanced, clad, as were his companions, in complete light-marching order.

"Well, Manajee," Mackenzie began, "so you wish to go back to your home, do you?"

"Yes, Sahib," was the reply. "This country is unknown to me. I have not seen these jungles."

"The tigers would laugh at your beard here, eh?" inquired Norman.

"The striped ones are deceitful, Sahib; I am not a guide in these jungles, therefore my service here would be of no use."

Another individual also here made a remark. "We have been long absent, Sahib people," he said. "The wife and little ones are looking along

our road daily. There will be no food in the house if we remain away longer."

"You could buy food and send it," said Hawkes, who desired to retain the men, as they had proved good and useful allies. Had he been so well versed in sporting matters as his companions, however, he would have known that such men are like fishes out of water, and of but little use away from their own well-known jungles, far from which they have a great dislike to go. "Why do you really wish to go, now?" he added. "We have paid you well."

"The Sahibs are great cherishers of the poor," Manajee replied. "Without doubt the gentlemen have treated us with great kindness. Our pay has been regularly paid. But it is the fit time to return to the village."

"You are getting fat and lazy, like a lot of Bunceahs," said Mackenzie, laughingly. "We have fed you so well that you can't work any longer."

"No, no, Sahib. The Sahib knows we are ready to beat the jungles near our village. These are too distant. It is a true word; we have had some very good dinners, but we are not fat," and he drew in his pinched-up stomach till there was a regular cavity.

In truth, the spare, thin, wiry frames of the dusky group showed few symptoms of obesity as

they stood there ready for their night march, and merely girt about the head, waist, and middle.

"Well, well, Manajee," said Mackenzie, "I suppose you must have your 'rooksut' (leave to depart). You have done good service, and your men have worked well. If we come again to this country next year, you must be ready for our service."

"Without doubt—certainly—we are ready whenever the Sahibs come"—the party murmured, generally. "Our houses—everything—are the Sahibs'. The faces of such shikarees will bring gladness to the village."

"Ay, ay, of course you say so. There is no difficulty in speaking. But I shall expect a messenger to come to me in Jehangeerpore if many tigers come about."

"Sahib, what word I say is true," replied Manajee. "I will myself bring khubber. Where the Sahibs are, there is no lack of food in the houses of the village. We hope the gentlemen will come to us next year. What can I say more?"

"Very good; remember your promise," Mackenzie answered. "Now I shall give each of you an extra day's pay, and a drink before you start."

Uttering murmurs of approval, the men ranged themselves round, received each his small donation

of money, which was transferred to a knotted corner of his puggree, drank his allowance of spirit at a gulp, and then, salaaming, moved off.

Manajee was the last to make his exit; and as he salaamed, exclaimed, "May good fortune be with the Sahibs. Their slave Manajee is always ready for their service in sport, and I am," he concluded, "a tree to tree guide, and I know every bush and stone in my country." So saying, he vanished in the gloom.

CHAPTER XIX.

Roopur—Marking down—The Black Gap—Beat in the Black Gap—A plucky Deed—Roopur's Triumph—Killed Dead—Reverence for a good Shot.

The shikaree, who had been deputed by the chief to look for game, proved a more useful ally than was expected; and though unacquainted with the manner in which the English hunters usually followed the sport, was of great assistance, from his knowledge of tracking and of the haunts of the game.

Though an exceedingly wild specimen of the *genus homo*, and at first rather doubtful of the exact nature of the white faces, he soon came to understand that they were liberal paymasters, and just in their dealings with the poor villagers. This secured his goodwill and aroused the desire, seldom dormant, for the acquisition of a few of those rupees which he had learnt the Feringees were ready to give in exchange for good and successful service.

There was in the neighbourhood a basin in the hills, almost rock-rimmed, with but a narrow neck, which, opening into the plain, gave exit in the monsoon to the abundance of water which poured into it from the heights around. This spot, he asserted, was frequently sought by tigers, even during the hottest weather, in preference to the cool river beds. Its attractions consisted in its secluded position, and the many dark, sheltered retreats which existed among its huge boulders, and under its overhanging cliffs.

While Rugonauth, therefore, with some of the local trackers, sought for pugs in the river which flowed in the vicinity and was a portion of that which watered Mungaum, Roopur, the new assistant, proceeded before dawn direct to the spot I have mentioned. Having posted one or two men in positions overlooking the basin itself and such inlets as a tiger could enter by, he established himself in a tree commanding the narrow opening to the plain, and there patiently waited.

Shortly before sunrise he saw a tiger approach at a walk from the direction of the river, enter by the opening on that side, and disappear among the jungle and rocks. More than once he again caught sight of it clambering over some obstructing boulder, or dimly moving among the bushes, until it finally

became lost to view near an overhanging cliff. For another half-hour he remained still and motionless; then quietly descending from his perch, he cautiously glided through the jungle to the trees in which were posted his fellow look-outs.

He found that two of them had also seen the animal; so leaving them with strict injunctions to keep a wary watch on the place, he started to inform the sportsmen of his successful reconnaissance, at the same time despatching one of his comrades to apprise Rugonauth.

Our friends were not prepared for such early news; but while the beaters were being assembled, they expeditiously breakfasted and arranged themselves in their shooting toggery.

Old Rugonauth had got on the track of the same tiger, which he was carefully following up when met by Roopur's messenger. Accordingly he gave up the scent and stopped at some little distance from the "Black Gap"—the name by which the place was known in the neighbourhood—and there awaited the arrival of the hunters.

This took place before long; and on consulting Roopur as to the nature of the ground, they had little difficulty in arranging the manner in which it should be beaten.

A strong party under Roopur himself was de-

tailed to advance directly above the place where the tiger was last seen, and near which, the shikaree was aware, existed several favourite dens, much affected by the feline race. The rest of the beaters were directed to go round to the further part of the basin, and then, in extended order, shout from the top of the cliffs and rocks. Hawkes went with them a part of the distance, and was posted in a tree on the side opposite to that where the tiger was expected to be found, and which, being less rugged, it was necessary to render secure. The other two were placed in trees commanding the gap itself. A dry watercourse, which came down the gorge, wound between them, and then passed into the plain.

When all were in their places, at a signal from Rugonauth, the howling simultaneously commenced, and was continued uninterruptedly for some time without anything showing. As it relaxed in vigour, various directions and many questions and answers were shouted across by the more prominent actors on either side. Fireworks were next produced, and, together with volleys of stones, were hurled from the cliff on which Roopur stood in command of his detachment. The shouts were renewed, but still no sign of any tiger.

As a lull again took place, Rugonauth could be

heard giving vent to his displeasure, in no measured terms of abuse, to the original look-outs, who, he declared, had deceived them all. He requested Roopur also to inform him if he considered himself a shikaree. If he had seen a tiger at all, it had slipped away. What manner of "bundobust" was that?

Perhaps he was a little irate at having been anticipated in his efforts to track the beast. Perhaps he really believed that the look-outs had allowed it to steal away unperceived. However that might be, he appeared by his taunts to consider that in some way Roopur and his comrades were very much to blame. The hunters, too, were beginning to think their new assistant was probably untrustworthy or inefficient.

As for Roopur, he said nothing in reply to all the chaff so freely lavished by the irascible Rugonauth. But he deemed that his credit was at stake—that his honour was involved in the question. He knew that his own eyes had not deceived him; he believed that his comrades had remained alert during his absence; and, further, he was well acquainted with the spot, and was aware that, sheltered by the overhanging cliff, were several dark cavities, whose recesses were impenetrable by anything thrown from above. He conjectured that in some one of these

the animal had sought retreat, and now lay unharassed by the missiles so freely expended.

Moved by the sarcasm of the professional shikaree, whose word was so much depended on by the hunters, he, as he himself would have expressed it, "bound on his courage."

Taking a couple of flower-pots, without making an observation to anyone or demanding any assistance, he descended the hill by a circuitous path, which led him to the foot of the cliff on which he had been lately standing. Stationing himself behind a boulder, he lighted one of his fireworks, and threw it into a recess which gaped black and dim a few yards from him. It fizzed and spluttered, then died out. He approached somewhat nearer, and lighting the other, threw it beyond a ledge which his closer position enabled him to discern. It had barely touched the ground when a roar came from the recess, and a tiger sprang out, passed within a few yards of him, and, after bounding over the boulders of rock in front, went galloping down the steep hillside.

When Roopur saw the success of his operation, and that the tiger was well clear of him, he jumped on to a rock in the sight of all the beaters, except those immediately above. Pointing with one hand triumphantly to the descending tiger, and with the

other gesticulating wildly towards Rugonauth, he shouted, in tones of exultation, "I knew well! I knew well! There he goes! Who said that he wasn't here, and that Roopur was a deceiver? Ha! ha!" And he laughed a laugh, disdainful yet triumphant.

His pæan was echoed from some threescore dusky throats, as the tiger broke in view of those assembled above. It did not require old Rugonauth's yell of warning to announce to the hunters the fact of the animal being on foot.

Hawkes, from his position opposite, at once caught sight of it, and had only time to fire one ineffectual shot before the beast became lost to view. It made no attempt to ascend in his direction, but turned down the gorge, and made direct for the positions of the two lower sportsmen. From out of some bushes it emerged, like a flash, in front of Norman, and bounded into the nullah at full speed. Catching a glimpse, between the stems of two trees, of the meteor-like mass of stripes and yellow shooting by, he fired, but without checking the beast; and in another moment it had passed.

He had just time to shout, "Look out, Mac!" when that individual, seated on a stump, not more than six feet above the ground, viewed the tiger dash out of the nullah, and take a path which led

right up to and past his position. The trigger of his trusty heavy rifle was touched, and a bullet crashed into the advancing body, which, turning a complete somersault, rolled over like a stricken hare. The left barrel was discharged at the doubled-up lump of quivering flesh; but it was unnecessary, for the first had proved fatal.

Norman, who had turned in his tree, now managed to bring his gun to bear, and inquired if he should fire.

"No, no," was the reply. "It's all right. He is as dead as a door-nail."

Hit within a distance of seven or eight yards, the first bullet had struck the tiger in the head, passed through, and, after traversing half the length of the body, lodged just within the skin of the belly.

The whole affair was seen by the beaters from their commanding position on the cliffs and upper ground, and the fall was welcomed with a chorus of approving and congratulatory howls.

Roopur was still standing prominently forward on his rock; and he now again turned his gaze upwards towards Rugonauth, as, pointing with his lean, scraggy arm down to the gap below, he asked him, with a derisive shout, if he was satisfied.

Leaping from his perch, however, he soon scrambled down the rugged hill-side, and shortly stood

in front of Mackenzie as he leant over the dead tiger.

Accustomed only to the use of the matchlock, and the slow and pottering character of the firing its make necessitates, the rapid yet successful aim at an animal—and that so fierce a one as a tiger—at full speed, appeared to him a prodigy of nerve, quickness, and dexterity. For a brief space he looked at Mackenzie with an aspect of profound admiration. He viewed him at the moment as something more than human—of an order of created things far superior to any he had hitherto met; and, under the influence of the sentiments of reverential awe thus inspired, he prostrated himself at Mackenzie's feet.

"Hulloo! what the deuce!—Get up, man! what are you at?" ejaculated Mackenzie, rather astonished at the excessive respect with which he was being treated. "Get up!" he repeated; and as the man arose, and disclosed the features of Roopur, he continued, "What! Roopur, is it you? Did you never see a tiger killed before? You marked down the beast very well. He broke famously. Your work is good."

"I have seen tigers killed before, Sahib. With this matchlock my father killed seven before me, and since then, his son, I—even I, Roopur—have slain five. But never saw I such a shot as to-day."

"Why, he was close enough. There was no difficulty in the shot," said Mackenzie, a good deal amused at the man's wonder.

"Ay, Sahib, easy if it had been standing. But a charging tiger! Such a death-dealing gun was never before seen. Crack! and in one breath a savage tiger found death! It was wonderful. The Sahib is assisted by spirits. I saw it all, and was amazed. May I be permitted to look at the gun?"

Mackenzie laughed as he good-naturedly handed his rifle for inspection, and asked if it was not a good gun.

"It is a gun beyond price, Sahib," replied Roopur, as he examined the weapon with a tender, deferential care. "It is a regular death-giver, and very heavy. But the Sahib is strong; and in his hands a cannon would be nothing."

"Why, you see, it requires weight to throw a bullet like this." And Mackenzie showed a conical "twelve." "And yet you see it only takes this charge of powder: not like the handful you people use in your matchlocks."

"Is this really all the powder required to fire this great bullet?" inquired Roopur, in astonishment. "The European people are very wonderful. They must make guns by witchcraft. It must hit hard, or the tiger would not have fallen!"

"Look at the tiger," said Mackenzie. "You may see it hit hard. The bullet entered at the head, and here it is." Drawing his hunting-knife, he made a small incision in the skin of the belly, where the bullet lay underneath, and extracted it, crushed and jagged by its passage through the body.

Roopur eyed it with great respect, and, stooping down, measured the distance it had passed, using his arm from tip of finger to elbow for that purpose.

"You thought to deceive me, did you?" he said, apostrophising the brindled beauty, as Mackenzie moved away. "Didn't you know Roopur had seen you? And you thought I had spoken a false word," he continued, turning to Rugonauth, who then joined him with a large portion of the men. "Here he is! Look at him! I knew his cunning, but it couldn't save him. The flower-pot reached him. *I* threw it!"

Even Rugonauth was obliged to admit that the tiger had certainly eventually proved to be at home. It was with but an ill grace, however, that he confessed his aspersions were unmerited.

As the day was young, the hunters proclaimed their intention of beating any favourable places on the chance of turning up something else; full liberty being allowed to fire at whatever might present itself.

Several places were accordingly tried, but without another tiger or even a bear being found. A samber, however, broke near Hawkes, and was accounted for by him.

CHAPTER XX.

Morning employment interrupted—A chance Tiger—A quiet Shot in the early morning—Anecdote: an affair on an Elephant—Extract from a Journal—Tigers right and left—The Tiger provider.

It was yet grey dawn on the following morning, when Norman, calling to his less wakeful friends to get up, kicked off his light blanket, and sat up on the side of the bed. After a stretch and yawn, and a look round, he again intimated to the occupiers of the neighbouring beds—which, like his own, were placed outside the tents under a mangoe tree—that it was time to turn out. He next shouted to the servant to bring the morning cup of tea, which was accordingly soon placed before him.

While engaged in sipping it, he amused himself by picking up one or two mangoes which had fallen close to his bed during the night, and throwing them at the still recumbent forms of his comrades.

He was in the very act of taking a deliberate shot at Mackenzie, whose bulky figure, lying with its back towards him, presented a large and tempting

mark, when his aim was suspended, as the waving of a cloth at a little distance attracted his attention and a cautious shout reached his ears.

He saw that it was some sort of signal, intended to be seen by the occupants of the camp; and accordingly jumped up and shouted to the signaller. This was replied to by the usual native movement of the hand which represents beckoning. Norman's answering shout had aroused the two sleepers, who now sat up rubbing their eyes, and demanding to know what he was making such a noise about.

"Here, Baloo," he called, before replying to his companions, "run and see what that man wants; he is calling to somebody. Go, quick!" Baloo, thus exhorted, went off at a great pace, and soon reached the man.

In the meantime, Norman explained that there was evidently something interesting taking place, and that he should be prepared. While saying this, he had been exchanging his paijamas for a pair of trowsers and putting on his shooting-coat and shoes with praiseworthy despatch, and before Baloo returned was ready to meet any call.

Baloo came back even faster than he had gone; and, almost breathless with excitement and the celerity of his movements, gasped out that the man had just seen a tiger.

"A tiger! where?" Mackenzie ejaculated, as, now completely aroused, he and Hawkes jumped up and got hold of their rifles.

"He saw him cross the river, Sahib, and go into the jungle on the other bank," Baloo answered.

Waiting only to put on shoes, and thrust their arms into their short shooting-coats, which with the baggy paijamas below formed anything but a pleasing or graceful sporting costume, the two followed Norman towards the man in a very brief space of time.

The fellow said that he was on his way to go and cut grass, when he had seen the tiger as described by Baloo. Under his guidance, the three hunters descended to the river; and there, sure enough, in the sand was the animal's recent foot-print. The jungle on the bank was thick and extensive; and should he not remain in it, the man said, would most likely leave by one of two paths in the direction of the hills.

Thinking the chance of intercepting him worth trying, the hunters determined to take up these positions. Several men of the village, who had been lounging about the camp, or in some way employed there, were dispatched by the servants with spare guns after their masters, and now reached the little party. Under the guidance of one of these, Mackenzie and Hawkes started off to occupy

one post, Norman and the grass-cutter proceeding in the direction of the other. The remaining men were directed to enter the jungle and strike the trunks of the trees with sticks or axes, so that, without being alarmed by shouting, the tiger might be induced quietly to sneak away when aware that men were at work in the cover.

The sportsmen felt the more inclined to try their luck at once, as they were aware the shikarees had gone to examine some covers at a considerable distance in the opposite direction; and before they could be summoned, the tiger might be far away. So, as I have said, they started for the two points recommended by the villager, in hopes of intercepting it.

The loose habiliments of Mackenzie and Hawkes were by no means adapted to climbing trees; so the two scrambled on to a high rock, which enabled them to see a little over the jungle, and there patiently waited.

Norman, who had much further to go, was longer in reaching the place selected by his guide; and when he had arrived there, debated whether he should also sit on a rock—of which there were several rising above the surrounding low jungle—or climb into a small tree which grew near. The man recommended the latter course; for from the

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tree, he stated, could be covered several open places not discernible from the rocks. Norman accordingly took his station in the tree.

He had not been there very long before he saw a jackal trot underneath. From this the native argued that the tiger would be very likely to follow, if he had any intention of leaving the jungle.

This he communicated in a whisper to Norman; and himself had probably a real belief that the jackal was in truth no other than an advanced attendant or satellite of the nobler beast. If he really entertained such a belief—as many do—his views of the subject were probably irrefutably confirmed by the appearance shortly afterwards of the tiger itself.

He was sneaking quietly along with his head low; the upper line of his whole body, from nose to setting on of tail, forming one long undulating line. The latter appendage was now carried drooping as he brushed through the jungle. It was evident he was in no great hurry, but stalking slowly through the thicket, either not finding the present cover to his taste, or deeming it desirable to avoid the near neighbourhood of the men who were busily employed in the other direction with their sticks and axes.

He passed behind one of the rocks I have referred to, and was for a few seconds lost to sight; but he

quickly re-appeared, and gave a fair clear shot as he crossed an opening in the bushes. Norman carefully covered him, fired, and the beast dropped dead without a groan.

Highly delighted with this most satisfactory result,—the more gratifying because so little expected at that early hour, for the sun had barely risen,—Norman awoke the jungle echoes with an exulting whoop, which ere long brought his brother sportsmen to his side; and soon afterwards they returned in triumph to camp.

"How lucky we have been with these two last tigers!" observed Hawkes, as they sat after breakfast. "Each polished off with a single shot. I suppose that does not often happen, does it?"

"Not very often," answered Mackenzie. "I think I have only once before managed it myself."

"When was that?" asked the young fellow, who was never tired of listening to the sporting anecdotes of his more experienced friends.

"Strange to say," was the reply, "it was on the only occasion on which I ever shot tigers from the back of an elephant. I was by myself, having borrowed an old tusker—a splendid shikaree elephant—from a native Rajah. I was on leave at the time, on the top of Mount Aboo, in Rajpootana, and

my shikaree had reported that three or four tigers held possession of some caves near the top of a small stony hill in the plain, about ten miles from the foot of the mountain. He told me they sometimes lay in the sandy waterless bed of a river not far from their usual stronghold, but that this was always uncertain.

"Well, having sent out a tent and guns, I rode one early morning down the mountain, and out to a village a couple of miles from the tigers' hill, having previously requested that the elephant might be sent to meet me. On my arrival there I found it all right, but rather 'must' and inclined to be cantankerous.

"The reports concerning the tigers were less favourable than I expected. They had not condescended to lie in the river for several days, but always retired to their caves before daylight. These were, it was said, quite unassailable, as they went deep into the interior of the hill itself. So how to get them out was a puzzle I did not attempt to solve. The year previously some men had failed in drawing them, though lavish in expenditure of fireworks.

"The only plan likely to succeed appeared to me to endeavour to keep them out when they had once left. Accordingly I made arrangements that a large

body of beaters should go to the top of the hill during the night, while the animals were away seeking their prey, and howl and shout till morning. This I hoped would prevent them from returning, and induce them, for one day at least, to remain contented with a resting-place in the bed of the river. I also directed that they should tie strips of white cloth about the bushes near the caves, so that even should the beasts not be scared by the noise on the hill above, they might, as they probably would, refuse to face such suspicious and unusual looking articles.

"My plan succeeded to admiration. On the following morning, my shikaree came in to say that the tigers—three in number—had been kept out of their usual retreat, and were then moving about suspiciously, and evidently in an undecided frame of mind, in the river. I mounted my pony and rode off to the scene of my intended operations, directing the elephant to follow as quickly as possible.

"Somehow or other my shikaree had either neglected to mark properly the spot where he had left a large body of beaters between the tigers and their hill, or else they had moved. However that was, he led me by a cart-road across the river, unaware at the time that two tigers were lying close by, and that the third had just passed. Indeed, a

partridge or two which flew up not far from me must have been disturbed by the latter.

"Luckily the beaters saw us, and soon let us know that the two tigers were between us and themselves. As it was, in threading our way through the bushes to reach the men, we should have come almost on the top of them had we not been warned in time. Circling a little round, however, we reached the men without disturbing or being disturbed by either.

"The elephant soon made its appearance, and I mounted into the howdah, leaving the beaters in a body on the bank of the river, and between myself and the caves. Both tigers were declared to be lying in some thick jow and grass; and one fellow in a tree declared he could see them.

"Well, I advanced all right directly up to the spot, and very soon made out, in the shade of the bushes, one tiger, lying with his fore-paws stretched in front, and with head erect, looking apparently directly at me. A word to the mahout, and he stopped the elephant; and, taking a deliberate pot, at a distance of not more than eight or ten yards, I fired. Somewhat to my astonishment, I must confess, not a groan or a growl answered the shot; the only difference seemed to be that the beast had placed its head between its paws. I had been ex-

pecting a charge, and was therefore a little staggered at such a silent, inactive way of receiving my salutation. Could the bullet have dropped out? I thought. But, no! the crack and feel of the gun made me feel convinced the bullet had been there. However, I didn't take much time to think, but fired again, and again, without any response on the part of the tiger.

"'He must be dead, Sahib!' said the shikaree, as he handed me another gun. And dead he was; as we found on approaching close up.

"The first bullet had cut through the side of the head, destroying a portion of the brain; and the only movement the beast made had been to drop its head."

"Well, but how about the others?" asked Hawkes, as Mackenzie ceased. "Did you bag them?"

"What an insatiable fellow you are for shikar stories!" laughed Mackenzie. "But as it is a fine trait in your character, and deserving of encouragement, I don't mind indulging you." And he thus continued:—

"For some time I could make out nothing of the other tiger, who was said to be but a few yards from his companion. He had not stirred at the shots; and, if indeed there, I knew must be close

by. The elephant was driven round the patch of cover, but I did not manage to detect my friend till I had returned nearly to the place from which I had shot the first.

"Here, all of a sudden, I twigged number two, looking at me from a position exactly similar to that of the other. Of course I at once ordered the mahout to stop, and the elephant did so, but with one foot down a sloping bank. I aimed, and fired; but in the very act of pulling the trigger, the elephant slightly moved from the awkward position in which it was, and my bullet flew harmless into the bushes. It was sufficiently close, though, to arouse my feline friend, who turned and made away among the jow. I lost sight of him, till he emerged on the other side of the thicker portion of the cover, and gave me a galloping shot as he made off. I fired twice, and I thought unsuccessfully; but some declared he was tickled up behind."

"What a pity," said Hawkes, "that you did not see them at the same time! You might have got tigers right and left. Did you see anything more of number two?"

"No," was Mackenzie's answer; "but number three afforded me some good sport.

"As soon as I had examined the dead tiger—which was a male of full length and height, but

very narrow in girth—I re-ascended the elephant, and commenced working down the jungle in the bed of the river, on the look-out for the tiger which had previously slipped away. Some of the favourite lairs were known to my man; so, pushing quickly through the jungle where it was thin and open, we examined carefully each denser bit, till we reached a thickish patch, which I was assured would very likely prove to contain number three.

"I stopped at the edge to reconnoitre, and soon saw the beast I was in search of. But the bushes were very thick, and I could not make out very clearly the outline of his form. He appeared to me, however, to be sitting down, with his back towards me, and listening. As I had only the single elephant, he probably did not consider the noise we made sufficiently alarming to induce him to move off. His want of caution eventually cost him dear. Whether he was meditating a bolt, or not, I don't know; but I soon settled the question by firing a couple of barrels at him, one or both taking effect. This, naturally, was very persuasive. With one short roar, he quickly disappeared among the bushes. I pushed on, but next saw him, far ahead, emerge from the thick cover among some scattered shrubs and rocks, in which he disappeared. I continued on, and beat the place, but without seeing him.

Some men, however, who, contrary to my orders, had followed me closely, now went along the bank of the river, and found him lying under a tree. Luckily, he did not charge, but sneaked away. Blood was there discovered, so we were assured he was wounded, and, owing to his want of either inclination or power to make straight away, probably severely. This we afterwards found to be the case; but for all that, I was the whole day engaged in following him, to the great disgust of the elephant, which he expressed by repeatedly refusing to go any further—roaring and waving his trunk about in a manner highly suggestive of the discomfort of being picked out of the howdah, and hurled to earth. In fact, the mahout's control of him was only very partial. I heard that soon afterwards he had become quite 'must' and unruly, was chained up, and no one dared approach him.

"After the men had seen the tiger, as I have said, we decided on 'pugging' him, and then, when tracked to any thick cover, again make use of the elephant. This we did; but the men after awhile asked me to remount, as I could then push on after the beast if we sighted it; and also, from my elevated position, be better able to discern it among the bushes. I did so, and the men continued tracking just in front. Once I saw the beast, but

as it was a most unfavourable shot, I did not fire.

"We pugged and pugged, with little intermission, for the best part of the day; but the beast was often evidently only just disturbed by our approach, and made off to some other place not far distant; so that, as the scent was warm, and any moment might give me a chance, the men, though wearied, held on.

"At last, we so pushed him, that we made him desert the prickly jungle on the banks of the river, and again take to the river-bed; and before following, we refreshed ourselves at a well where there was a trough for watering cattle. It was the shikaree's impression that the wretched, wounded beast was hovering about this place—the only water near—in the hope of getting a drink; but as all the beaters were collected there, and as we kept the unhappy animal constantly moving, he found no opportunity of satisfying his thirst.

"It was now approaching sundown, as I pushed through the thick tract of jow into which the tiger had been traced. All the beaters were collected on the bank, as, getting the old elephant along with some difficulty, I advanced alone, with the shikaree beside me. We beat carefully along, but the cover was very thick. I remember we came across the

nearly finished carcase of a young wild boar, which had, I presume, been caught napping, and surprised by one of the tigers a night or two before. Suddenly, when I had beaten nearly to the end of the patch of jow, I heard a roar far in my rear, and turning round, I saw a couple of men flying for their lives through the bushes, and the tiger, fortunately for them, galloping in an opposite direction. The men, I afterwards learnt, had again disobeyed my strict injunctions, and entered the cover. How they escaped, I don't know; the tiger must have been a very cowardly one, though he did afterwards show fight.

"Well, he galloped across an open bit of sand in the centre of the river's bed, and once more lay up in some thick jow. I turned back and made towards the place; and, directed by some men on the bank, advanced straight on the spot where he was. He started up, and galloped across my front, and I sent him heels over head—a complete somersault—with a bullet through the shoulder, and drove a second one into him before he recovered himself. This, however, he did, and came down straight at the elephant, tail on end. I just managed to cock a barrel of my second gun, and turned him, when within two or three yards, with another shot in the shoulder. He passed close to the foot of the ele-

phant, who, though a staunch, experienced old fellow, gave a sort of squeak, and turned half round. After galloping a few yards, the tiger again faced me—as we brought the elephant round—and lay down, clawing at the earth and bushes in his pain. I gave him another shot, and he turned and slunk into a deep narrow nullah. It was some time before I could make him out after I advanced to it, but at length the mahout discerned his tail; so, circling round, I soon got a better view of him, and saw that he was very nearly expended. I administered one pill more, by way of *coup de grâce;* and as the sun was sinking, we pulled out of the nullah the dead body of a huge male tiger of enormous girth.

"We found that one of my first bullets had gone through a paw, and another had entered at the loins, and—as with the tiger yesterday—had lodged just within the skin of the belly. No wonder the poor beast was averse to travelling far!"

"A very nice day's sport," remarked Norman, when Mackenzie had concluded. "But rather a pity, certainly, as Hawkes says, that you did not get a right-and-left shot at the two first."

"Have tigers ever been shot right and left?' inquired Hawkes. "I don't mean only wounded, but effectually polished off."

"I should suppose they have, occasionally," Nor-

man replied. "At any rate, I know for certain of one instance of a successful right-and-left shot; for it happened to a dear friend of my own—now gone, poor fellow!—whose journal is in my possession."

"How was it?" asked the ever-ready Hawkes.

"I will tell you. I should premise, though, by saying that only one of them was full grown—that was a tigress; the other was her cub, about half or three parts grown. By-the-bye, I believe I have the journal with me, so I may as well read the brief humorous description, only written, of course, as a private record."

Norman went into the tent, and soon returned with an old note-book, nearly full of manuscript. He sighed as he opened it, thinking of the cheery smile and the laughing, deep, brilliant blue eye of the friend of his youthful manhood. He thought of the warm-hearted lad, the determined and daring man, who had shared with him many of the sports of his earlier days in India. He remembered him as he was—cool, resolute, and dauntless; of a nerve which quailed at nothing, and therefore a man well calculated to distinguish himself in those sports where pluck and resolution are requisite. As he glanced over the pages of the book, there rose before him the vision of the merry, clever writer—the free,

frank young fellow who was gifted with a strange power of attracting attachment in others. Pointing to the page containing the description he had referred to, he gave the book to Hawkes, and left his friends.

Mackenzie explained to Hawkes, in reply to his inquiries, that the writer of the journal had been much attached to Norman; a regard fully reciprocated by the latter.

Hawkes now read what I should say is a *bonâ fide* transcript from a rough journal now lying before me:—

"'11*th*.—Khubber again of the tigress and cub in the same place as the day before yesterday. We were posted rather higher up the hill this time. After waiting for some time, I heard a rustling, and saw the tigress sneaking along a path that led directly under my tree. I did not move a muscle, but just brought my rifle a little more to the front. The sun shone on it at that moment, and the beast twigged.

"'I have seen many amiable expressions of countenances in my life, and heard many pretty sounds; but I never saw or heard such a face and roar as the brute indulged in as she pulled up. I thought she was going to charge, so determined to let her come as near as she liked: but after taking a good

*dekh** at me, she wheeled about, and was making off, when I took a quick shot, and floored her. I could just see her tail move, and that was all. I was just looking out, to see if I could not get another shot at her, when I saw one of the cubs sneaking up the hill, about forty yards off, and immediately sent a bullet through him, thus making a right-and-left shot at tigers. I could hear him breathing heavily in the jungle, some distance off, but could not see him. I reloaded my rifle, and then tried to make out where the tigress was; but not a bit of her could either I or the shikaree see, though we both of us climbed right up to the top of the tree, and I began to be afraid she had sneaked away while I was cooning her infant. After waiting about half-an-hour, I got out of my tree, and sneaked up the hill, coming down over the place where I had fired at the tigress, and there, to my great delight, she lay behind a stone, that prevented my seeing her from my "mandwa." She must have fallen dead on the spot, as she never even growled. I then went in pursuit of the young 'un, and found him also dead under a tree. L——* says I have grown two inches, but I don't believe

* Hind. for look.

† The writer's companion, who was posted in another part of the jungle.

him. The bullet that killed the tigress took effect high in the left shoulder, and after passing through her neck, lodged under her right ear. She was in the act of turning at the time.'"

"How capital!" exclaimed Hawkes. "It would be worth a year of life to perform such a sporting feat—and done so cleverly, too."

"Yes, it is not everybody who has the luck to get the chance, or make the most of the luck when he does get it."

Norman now rejoined them, and the conversation turned on the subject of the jackal-attendant of the tiger—or the "lion-provider," as it is termed, in performing a similar duty for that beast of prey.

"Some suppose," said Mackenzie, "that it leads the tiger up to game; its superior sense of smell enabling it to act as guide. Others fancy that it merely accompanies the tiger, so as to come in for a share of the feast, when the nobler animal has satisfied itself."

"But then, in the latter case," said Hawkes, "they would follow, and not precede the tiger. I wonder if there is really anything in the tradition?

"The natives believe in it," observed Norman. "But, apparently, it is not every jackal who is eligible for the situation. The cry of the regularly appointed one is quite different to the usual howl."

What!" asked Hawkes, "does he not give the regular cry, which sounds like 'Here's the body of a dead Hindoo—ooo—where—where—here—here?'"

"No," was the reply. "His cry is even less euphonious than the one you so agreeably describe. It is, I believe, that of the old jackal which has been turned out of the pack. I do not mean that whenever it is heard, a tiger is invariably supposed to be near; but it is considered that those alone who so howl have the honour of accompanying the tiger on his nightly rambles. It is probably a merely accidental matter altogether."

"I remember reading of a case somewhere," Mackenzie said, "regarding a man—an officer—who was a sceptic on the subject. He was in ambush for deer at night, in the middle of a field, heard the peculiar cry of the jackal, and soon after, to his astonishment—for it was quite unexpected in that part—a tiger made its appearance. Of course, he drew the conclusion that there was something more than fiction in the belief of the natives."

Rugonauth now came in to say that he was unable to mark anything down, and had not even come on the pug of the tiger which had been killed in the early morning, having, with Roopur, gone to examine some covers miles away in the opposite

direction. As it was quite late in the day, there was nothing to be done till evening.

They were averse to fire about the place for fear of frightening any possible visitor; and as it was determined to send a party to look for bears in the hills on the morrow, they were also unwilling to disturb that part of the country. A short stroll, therefore, and a little bow-and-arrow shooting with some of the native weapons, were the only amusements that evening.

Strange to say, when shooting at a considerable distance at a piece of paper stuck up as a mark, Mackenzie made a better shot than any of the natives. It was probably beyond their usual range, for they occasionally kill samber and other game when close, and otherwise make capital practice in the jungle.

Perhaps, as Mackenzie told Hawkes, the strangest mode of archery in use among the natives of India, is that practised by the Beloochees in Scinde.

Parties of that wild race are in the habit of going out, ten or a dozen strong. They go quietly along in line till some partridge or other bird—and they are not very particular—is observed. It is then marked into a bush, and the bush surrounded. When the bird flies up, ten or a dozen arrows are

simultaneously discharged at close quarters, and usually with effect. In fact the bird rarely escapes. The bows are very small; and the arrows are not weighted, feathered, or pointed, but consist simply of pieces of rounded sticks, the object being to strike with the side of the arrow and not with the head. But they hit remarkably hard, and a bird is sometimes cut clean in two.

They have frequently been known to kill the oubara (a bird of the bustard species) in this way.

CHAPTER XXI.

The last Bear—An engagement without Beaters—A well-known Pug—Roopur's story—On the trail of the Man-killer—The Bivouac.

AGAIN was Mr. Roopur's star in the ascendant. He had gone out into the hills with a party of men before dawn, leaving Rugonauth to examine the country about the river for tigers.

A bear was seen soon after daylight, and marked to a shelving rock on the side of a hill, where he finally took up his quarters for the day. The place being open, was easily kept in view, and the beast could not leave it without being seen by the men stationed on the opposite hill. Taking up his position there with four or five others, Roopur dispatched a messenger to apprise the hunters of his success, and to tell them beaters were not required.

After the lapse of a sufficient time, they were discerned making their way through the jungle at the foot of the range of hills, and Roopur joined them under a tree which he had fixed on as the resting-place for the horses.

Roopur himself then officiated as conductor, and led the way up the steep hill-side. He had selected the place of ascent round a shoulder of the hill, so that there should be no chance of disturbing the sleeping bear prematurely. On reaching the top, the hunters stopped awhile to recover breath, and then continued on till they arrived above the place where bruin was enjoying his mid-day nap.

The hill-side was very stony, with one or two large rocks standing out boldly; but jungle was very scantily scattered about it. Under one of these rocks the bear was known to be, but owing to the difference in their appearance when seen from above, and when from opposite, Roopur was unable to decide exactly which.

Hitting on one which he thought the most likely, he guided the party down towards it. Some signals, however, from the men stationed on the opposite slope in observation, induced him to change his direction towards another rock; but unfortunately, instead of being able to approach it directly from above, this divergence now obliged them to do so laterally. The consequence was that the bear was aroused, and a yell from the men on the other side proclaimed that it had left its shelter.

Mackenzie, who, under Roopur's directions, was leading, the others following in Indian file, jumped

on to a small boulder, and caught a glimpse of the bear. At the same moment, the beast viewed him. It had been going partly away, but now without the slightest hesitation turned at once, and made at him.

It received the contents of the first barrel with a growl, and commenced a series of the most ungainly dancing movements imaginable; jumping about as if indeed, as Roopur observed, it was nautching. The second barrel served, however, to recall its wandering faculties, and it turned and went lumbering best pace down the steep hill-side. In this it was assisted by Norman, who came up, made a fair running shot, and knocked the retreating beast over. Down it went, bumping about and rolling over and over, till it reached the bottom, where it recovered itself, and crept into a ravine which there intersected the hills.

The party followed as quickly as they could, half running, half scrambling among the rocks and rolling stones which were plentifully strewn about, and rendered progression both uncertain and unpleasant. In hopes, however, of overtaking the wounded animal, and bringing it to bay in the nullah, they gave little heed to these difficulties, or the chance of a sprained ancle. But when they reached the bottom, they found that, though blood was

plentifully sprinkled about, the bear had made good use of the start he had gained, and was out of sight.

Roopur now took up the trail, which, from the quantity of blood, was for some time a very easy matter. But when this failed, and it became difficult to trace the foot-print among the stones, not only did he make some very scientific casts, but he displayed no little generalship in another way. Summoning a couple of the men, he directed them to ascend the hill on the right of the nullah down which he was tracking, and make across to a ravine which he was aware lay on the other side, and which joined that he was now in round the shoulder of the hill. He mentioned a certain spot to which they should go, and there watch; for, from his knowledge of the ground, he believed it likely the bear would make in that direction. In the mean time, he himself continued with the hunters on the trail.

Another half-hour passed, and the tracking was becoming very uncertain, for great slabs of sheet rock and other obstacles to pugging were of frequent occurrence, when a shout from the hill above arrested them. Very few words were necessary to make them understand that the bear had been seen; indeed a few signals were all that

passed, but they were quite sufficient for the purpose.

Mackenzie looked at the stiff climb before him with a rueful face, but girded his loins for the effort, and the ascent was eventually accomplished. Once on the top, he declared he could not continue without some water, and though Norman was impatient to be moving on, he was obliged to wait till his thirsty friend had taken a long pull at the chogul.

The man who had called them, stated, that very soon after arriving at the place indicated by Roopur, and which commanded the ravine, the bear had passed at a slow pace, and that his companion was still watching it. Accordingly when Mackenzie was satisfied, they made the best of their way there, and found that the beast had turned into a thickly wooded nullah.

They now separated; Mackenzie making with Roopur for the head of the nullah, the other two for a point which it was thought likely the bear had not yet passed. Cautiously approaching, about twenty yards apart, the latter pair peered over a ledge of rock from which a good view was obtained of the wooded depths below.

They could see nothing, but were still engaged in scanning the tangled undergrowth, when a grunting "ough, ough," startled them to a knowledge of the

proximity of bruin in an unexpected quarter. He had passed the place before their arrival, and now emerged from some bushes, and was bearing down on Norman, who was nearest, evidently in a most vicious frame of mind, and then not more than ten yards off. Turning rapidly to meet it, he aimed quickly and fired, and the bear fell. Norman had not yet found time during the hurried pursuit to reload his right barrel, and he now turned to exchange his empty rifle for another gun, but found that the bearer thereof—a new and untried villager—had retreated. It was fortunately a matter of little importance, for even before Hawkes could deliver his shot, the bear had rolled over the ledge and shut up in a bush. When Norman had obtained a fresh gun, the two went down into the nullah and soon put an end to what yet remained of the dying beast's life.

They now adjourned to a muddy pool of water, the only one in the neighbourhood, and gave the few men with them an opportunity of quenching their thirst.

The day was intensely hot, and no wonder the men crowded down to get first drink of the not very pure water. But even as they did so, with Roopur at the head, the latter stopped so suddenly, that one or two of the others ran against him.

"Stop," he said. "Don't go in front," and he stooped down and carefully inspected the ground.

"What have you got there?" asked Mackenzie, who had thrown himself down under a tree, and with hat off, was engaged in passing a small pocket-comb through his hair—a most refreshing and restoring process, by the way, especially when perspiring profusely—"What is it?"

"The pug of a tiger, Sahib," was the reply. "He was here this morning."

"And may be a dozen miles away by this. You should have visited the water early."

"Your worship. I would have done so, but we saw the bear, and I could not leave him."

"Ah! well, take no thought of it. We may perhaps get a chance to-morrow."

"Sahib," said the man, "I think this tiger is not far off. He was here late in the morning. But we have no beaters," and he looked sorrowfully on the small knot of men collected round. "I know this tiger—my curses be on him—but I have not seen his pug for a long time. He killed my father." This was said in the calmest manner possible, and as if a mere ordinary circumstance was referred to.

"Killed your father!" exclaimed the hunters, in a breath. "Gad! the man speaks of it," added

Hawkes to his companions, "as if it was an every-day occurrence."

"Yes, Sahib," replied Roopur. "I speak a true word. He killed my father, and another man before him."

"How do you know it is the same?" asked Norman, who approached the place.

"Look here, Sahib; see, his foot has a twist. My father's bullet caused that. I thought this tiger of the devil had left the country, or been killed without my help. But now I hope it may yet be my destiny to see his death agony. It is in the hands of God." The man had spoken in a voice of the utmost unconcern, but the grind of the teeth which accompanied his last observations, conveyed to the hearer an idea that his calmness was but assumed, and that a deep thirsty longing for revenge was really stirring strong in the man's heart.

"True. It has a twist," said Norman, as he attentively examined the pug. "This near fore-leg you mean."

"That is the leg, your honour."

"Well, when you have drunk water, we should like to hear how it came to kill your father. We will rest awhile, and then afterwards see what we can make of the trail."

"It is the Sahib's order," and the man went down

to drink at the pool, while Norman returned to his friends under the tree, and joined them in consuming some biscuits and potted meat, washed down with a little brandy-and-water, and followed by a handful of korinda berries from the neighbouring bushes.

"I have followed that pug for days at a time," commenced the shikaree, after drinking with much evident relish, the small glass of brandy offered him by the hunters. "For many, many times have I been on his trail, and never yet seen him but once since the day my father found death by his means. He knew that the son of his victim was on his track, and he feared. But he is as deceitful as a woman. His cunning is greater than a fox's. Once, and once only, I saw him; but the matchlock is not as the guns of the Sahibs, neither is the hand of Roopur as their hands. Enough. He escaped, and I ate my heart with grief. Still I followed day after day; but he is so cunning that he seldom remains more than a day in one place, and travels many coss during the night. By the good fortune of the Sahibs, I hope his time has now come, and that the old man will be avenged. If your honours give permission, Roopur will not leave the trail till he has taken an answer from this devil-born tiger."

'Well, Roopur, you must be quick about it, if we

are to join in the affair," said Mackenzie. "Our camp goes off to-morrow night."

"I know it, Sahib. I well wish it had been my luck to come across this pug before. But there is till to-morrow night. If it be destined to die, it will die. The Sahibs' good fortune is great."

"Now tell us how your father met his death," said Mackenzie.

"My father," resumed the man, "was the greatest shikaree in these jungles. Seven times has the village rejoiced over the death of bullock-slayers. But his time came. Who can change that? On the day he went out to try and kill this tiger—who had once killed a man, and done much harm to the village people—the women and children smiled to think that there would be no more fear when they went to cut grass or wood, and the men spoke in praise. But who could tell that the rejoicing would be changed into the death lament? Enough. It was destined.

"The tiger had killed a bullock in a field of grain not far from the village, and my father sat up over it at night with three other men. The tiger came, but the bullet was turned aside, and the beast escaped. Morning came, and my father returned silent and crest-fallen to the village. He was met by anxious inquiries, but he only shook his head,

and went to his hut. There, for half-an-hour he sat alone. But after that he came out, and went to the tree beneath which many were listening to the tale of his companions. 'The tiger must die,' he said, 'who will help me to kill him?' Many of the young men stood up and said they were ready. My father selected five, all armed with swords and matchlocks, and again they went to the field. They walked round it, and found that the tiger was still in the high grain. Then they got on his trail and followed him to his lair. My father was leading, and was the first to see him. He fired, and this time no spirit changed the course of the bullet. It struck the tiger; but in the next moment my father lay dead, with his skull crushed, and the tiger dashed away. It has since been a little lame, and has become very cunning. But now I know that it is still alive I shall not rest till it dies."

"But take care, Roopur," said Mackenzie, as the man concluded his brief narrative, "or your fate may be the same as your father's."

"If it will be so, Sahib, it will be."

"Well, what is to be done now?" Norman asked. "We have not enough men to beat. It will be as much as they can do to carry the bear into camp. But we might inspect any favourite places in the neighbourhood."

"It might only disturb him," replied Roopur, "and he would slip away and travel far during the night. But to-morrow I hope he will be found. Something in my heart tells me he has not long to live."

The hunters took Roopur's advice, and left it to him alone to hunt the trail. The shikaree remained behind when they left for the camp, having arranged with one or two of his companions to return with food when the bear had been carried to the tents; for he had determined to pass the night in the jungles, and reserve all his strength for the further prosecution of his purpose.

Rugonauth was a little jealous of the success achieved by Roopur; "his nose," as Hawkes observed, "having been quite put out of joint" since their arrival at their present hunting-ground. But still he determined to aid him as much as possible in his endeavours to compass the destruction of the man-killer.

Should the tiger remain in the hills, he knew there was little hope of tracking it, unless chance should greatly favour them. He therefore determined to examine the neighbourhood of the river in the early morning, in case of its seeking refuge there.

Only when evening fell did Roopur desist from his occupation of following the trail. He could not

do so uninterruptedly,—the ground was too stony for that,—but working with his assistants on a plan of mutual aid, they managed to carry the trail to some thick jungle in a ravine among the hills, and which opened towards the river and the plain.

As darkness came on, they left the hills and selected, as their place of repose, a tree on an open space near the river's bank. A very short time sufficed for them to cut down some bushes, which were arranged as a sort of barrier. Behind this they ate their frugal meal of chupatties, and after a few whiffs at the common pipe, wrapped themselves in their cumbleys and were soon asleep.

CHAPTER XXII.

Still on the Trail—The Man-killer traced—Difficulty to make him show—Bold Tactics rewarded—Roopur's Address—Heavy Joke—Effects of a Jungle Life.

Before the earliest jungle-cock saluted the first faint streak of dawn, and the feathered race woke to recognise the advent of another day, the men had risen from their recumbent posture, and were now squatted on their hams. Still, however, they retained their cumbleys well wrapped about them, for the first fresh hour before sunrise strikes chill to the native frame, even in the hot season. Again, the hubble-bubble made its refreshing rounds, and Roopur girded about his waistcloth a belt and pouches containing ammunition for his cherished matchlock.

Soon after dawn they were on the move, and approaching the entrance to the ravine where the trail had been left on the preceding evening. Here they waited a brief space, till there should be sufficient daylight to enable them to ascertain if any

recent footprint left it on that side. This was, ere long, found to be the case, and Roopur saw at once that the trail was that of his hated enemy. Had it been that of another tiger, he would have left his companions to pursue it, or call Rugonauth for that purpose, for he himself had vowed to let nothing divert his attention from the pug of the twisted foot.

The ground was favourable for tracking; and the trail being but a few hours old, the pugges ran on the scent breast-high. They carried it towards the river, which it entered, and the marks plainly indicated to these acute woodsmen where the animal had stopped to drink. From this it had turned, and followed the course of the river.

Where the jungle became thick, they left the immediate trail, and cast round to hit on the place of exit. They did not expect that it had yet taken up its position for the day, but this was a quicker method than following on the trail through thick cover. In this way several thick patches of jungle were passed, the animal having apparently gone straight through them, with little or no delay. But Roopur was prepared to be led a long stern-chase by the cunning animal, whose habits he had learnt to know so well. As they got further on, he certainly found it had turned here and there, probably

in search of prey, but its general course was directly away.

"He will be making for the 'Ban Peeplee,'" Roopur at length observed to his companions; an almost complete silence having hitherto reigned.

A brief grunt of assent was the only reply to this remark, as they continued perseveringly to carry on the track.

A shrill whistle in their rear now caused the little party to halt, and turn round. This was caused by Rugonauth, who, with a few men, had come across the track of Roopur where he had stopped to examine the marks at the drinking-place. The former saw, of course, that they were on the pug of the tiger, and so open a trail as was left by the advanced party was easily and rapidly followed. In this way he had caught up the leaders, and now they set to work in company.

Roopur, however, ere long felt almost satisfied that the tiger was making for the cover which was known by the name of the "Ban Peeplee"; and this fact, derived from his local knowledge, he communicated to Rugonauth.

It was soon arranged that the latter with his party should proceed at once to the jungle in question; and, if successful in finding the trail there,

send back at once for the others, who in the meantime were to continue pugging.

This was done; and Rugonauth, on reaching the "Ban Peeplee," distant about a couple of miles, had the satisfaction of finding the peculiar pug, and, after making his cast, ascertaining that the tiger was at home.

Roopur received the news with a grim smile of satisfaction as he muttered, "I dreamt it! I was not mistaken yesterday! His day has come!"

Unusual care was taken in placing the markers, so that all the approaches to the cover should be well watched; and some men were collected from a village about a mile distant. They had run the trail to a place at least six miles from the camp; so arrangements were made for obtaining as many beaters as could be collected in the neighbourhood.

Acting on the strict injunctions of the shikarees, the markers preserved a death-like stillness. Under the fierce rays of the mid-day sun, animated creation, too, had slunk to the shelter of the trees and thickets, so that unbroken silence seemed to pervade the hot haze which rested on the entire scene, and to be its most obvious attribute. The crisp dried grass bent and crackled, and the leaves of the trees rustled in the parching wind, but hardly a living

sound was heard to show that any moving thing inhabited the sun-stricken thicket.

Two or three hours had elapsed before the hunters reached the shelter of the tree to which they had been guided. They were more anxious even than usual to bag this tiger, both on Roopur's account and that of his defunct father, and also because the animal was likely to become a confirmed man-eater. Though he had caused the death of two men, that was in a measure in self-defence ; he had not done so for the sake of food.

Not yet had he been known to become—what may be called—a professional man-eater ; that is to say, he did not as yet entirely devote himself to obtaining human flesh for food. But there were grave fears that he would shortly do so. The beast was getting very old, which, combined with his slight lameness, would soon render him unable to cope with the activity of jungle game, and reduce him to the alternative of preying on man.

Regular man-eaters are usually described as being mangy and hairless, the effect, it is supposed, of their peculiar diet. But as this effect is not observed among cannibals, it may be but the natural consequence of old age, and to that, probably, should be attributed the state described.

Natives, at any rate, in some parts of the country,

consider that it is usually the aged animals who become confirmed man-eaters; though, possibly, circumstances may develop a taste for human blood in younger beasts. The exceeding wariness and cunning of the man-eater is another symptom indicative of the experience attained by age only.

However, the hunters were of opinion that it was more than commonly desirable that this beast should be destroyed, and determined to devote one more day to the attempt, should they be unsuccessful on the present occasion.

After the arrangements for the beat had been discussed under the tree where the shikarees had met the sportsmen, at some distance from the cover, they all proceeded to their allotted positions.

A ridge of hills here ran out into the plain, the upper part being rocky and precipitous, but the lower an easy slope, covered with jungle.

The beaters were sent to one end, so as to drive the cover along the face of the hill. The upper rocks, it was not considered the tiger would attempt. It remained, therefore, only to guard the bottom of the hill and the other end. The latter station was occupied by Hawkes, the others remaining at different situations below.

The place was altogether very extensive and with many outlets, and for upwards of an hour the

beaters perseveringly worked through the jungle without anything being discovered. At last some of them came upon his lair, now vacated, but showing undoubted signs of having been very recently tenanted; so that there could be no doubt the beast was sneaking somewhere in the vicinity. This fact was soon proclaimed, and raised the drooping spirits of the hunters.

Another quarter of an hour passed, and still the cunning animal had not as yet rendered himself visible to any one. Hawkes was the first to get a view. Roopur had been very earnest in impressing on the sportsmen the necessity of remaining perfectly quiet and silent, or the tiger would never show. Hawkes had acted religiously on this advice, and now reaped the benefit of it. Though his throat was husky, and one leg cramped from being so long in an uncomfortable position, he had braced himself to endure all, so long as there was a chance of a visit from the wily enemy.

Turning from glancing towards Norman, who was nearest to him, he let his gaze fall on a nullah, one of the ways of exit over which he was stationed to keep guard. Looking in the direction of his tree, there was the tiger, or rather its face, for that was all he could see of it. It was evidently endeavouring to make out if all was clear in front, at

the same time listening to the noise of the beaters. If Hawkes had taken time for consideration, he would probably have reserved his fire till he got a clearer view and a closer range; but he was too anxious to secure any chance. Accordingly he fired, and, as he believed with effect, and the animal immediately disappeared.

A warning shout to Norman indicating the direction taken, enabled the latter just to catch one brief glimpse of the bright black-striped jacket as he watched the line pointed out. He immediately saw that he had no chance of getting a shot from where he then was, so he resolved to endeavour to get in front of the animal and intercept its retreat. Hastily descending from his tree, he ran up to the top of a knoll which formed a detached portion of the hill, and just as he reached the top, detected the tiger in the act of rounding the little hill itself below. The animal evidently saw his adversary, and paused for a moment as if doubtful what to do. It was about a hundred yards off, and in the position in which it then stood, presented only its chest. Norman was a little blown, and somewhat unsteady from his run, and doubtful of hitting at the distance; he dropped on one knee, however, took rapid aim and fired. The bullet struck fair in the chest; and acknowledging the civility

with a savage grunt, the tiger turned and made off.

Nothing was now seen of him for some short time, till Hawkes viewed him in the jungle, but out of all reasonable range. Suddenly, to his horror, he saw the tiger drop on its belly and creep rapidly towards a clump of beaters. A few frantic shouts warned the unsuspicious men of their danger. Running, they knew would have been useless, and only drawn on themselves the tiger's last furious rush. Fortunately the party was pretty strong in numbers, and stuck well together, whacking the bushes before them, and shouting vigorously. Seeing the determined, unyielding front presented by its enemies, the tiger thought better of his intention, and desisted from the threatened attack. But not entirely scatheless did the party emerge from the peril. The tim-tim wallah—a little fellow who had played a very conspicuous as well as noisy part in the performance—was so overcome with his own strenuous exertions and fright at the magnitude and proximity of the danger, that he rolled head over heels into the bed of a nullah, with some injury to his person.

Rugonauth had now collected the beaters into one body, and Roopur leaving them, came round to the knoll on which he saw Norman standing.

"I told you it was a deceitful one, this tiger, Sahib," he said. "I much fear that after all he will slip away. He is cowardly, and will not face your lordships to eat of bullets. I know not where to seek him." This was said dejectedly, as if the speaker was mourning bitterly the chances of escape.

"Nor I," replied Norman. "This seems as good a place as any, till we hear something of his whereabouts. None of the markers seem to have discovered him."

But while Norman was yet speaking, a man came running round to say that he had just seen the beast, and could show where it was retreating, if they made haste. Norman at once started off, and was just in time to get a snap shot as the tiger disappeared in a nullah, the result of which was a stern wound, but not of a nature to stop it.

The animal had now got among very broken ground, intersected by various nullahs, but a little more open in respect of jungle. After loading, Norman gave his spare gun to Roopur, with strict injunctions that the latter was on no account to fire until he had himself done so. Cocking both barrels of his own rifle, he led the way to a place from which he thought he might intercept the tiger. They had just reached it, when a rustling and

crackling in the bottom of the nullah announced the presence of some heavy animal, and almost immediately afterwards a transient glimpse of the striped jacket in thick jungle showed that they were in presence of the enemy.

Roopur, without a moment's hesitation, brought up his gun to his shoulder; but Norman placed his hand on the lock and motioned that he was not to fire. He saw, by the direction in which the animal was moving, that he must, within a few yards, cross an open space and give a clear uninterrupted view. For a brief minute's space he stood silent and motionless; and then, as anticipated, the tiger's form emerged from the jungle, and gave the opportunity for which Norman had so patiently, and with such judgment waited.

Quickly, but with precision, the bead was drawn on the skulking animal's shoulder, and it fell to the shot which reverberated among the nullahs. A wild cheer broke from the throats of some thirty of the beaters, who from a distance saw the beast fall, and shouted his death knell. This was followed by a shot from Roopur, who had been all this time aiming. In its expiring agony the tiger was still giving one or two convulsive kicks, so that the shikaree might fairly claim to have assisted personally in closing its career. It is true, his shot was

unnecessary, except to "make assurance doubly sure," for Norman's had cured it of man or bullock-slaying for ever; but the last ebbing throbs of life still lingered when Roopur's bullet struck, and his father was avenged.

The final catastrophe was too much for his equanimity. Regardless of Norman's proximity, he almost screamed as he ran down into the nullah before the hunter, and cursed the dead creature and all its kith and kin for many generations. Nor was he sparing of the most voluble abuse seriously reflecting on the female members of its race. At the same time he bestowed a series of kicks on the body, and ended by apostrophising it.

"Ah! devil! Unlawfully begotten devil; may your grave be defiled! What, did you not know that Roopur was on your track? Ha, ha! Did no tiger spirit whisper that Roopur had sworn to see you die? This is his bullet. Did nothing tell you last night that Roopur was near? Your cunning was great. You thought again to deceive him. But not this time. Your time was come; and no longer will the old man be troubled that his son has not avenged his death. It is accomplished. What else? Justice has been done. You have died by my means."

Thus concluding his address, Roopur gave one

last disdainful kick as Norman descended into the bed of the nullah, and turning hastily, salaamed to him.

Gratitude is certainly not a predominating feature of the native character; but at that moment, Roopur felt something very like it for the man by whose instrumentality the accomplishment of his revenge had been effected.

He touched Norman's feet with his hands, and then his own forehead—typical of placing the dust from beneath them on his head—and then stood erect, as his coal-black eye gleamed with excitement and gratified rage.

Norman took no notice of what might have been considered the want of the usual respect, shown by the shikaree's precipitate rush past him, and his forgetfulness of his presence. He simply said, "Your father will be all right now. We have taken an answer from the tiger for his death. He will never kill anyone else. I am much pleased that we have at last destroyed the beast."

"Sahib," the man replied, "my father's son is your slave. All he has is yours. He will do whatever service he is told to do. The Sahib's name will be great for ever in the villages of this country, and remain in the mouths of the people."

Hawkes now joined, and was soon after followed

by Mackenzie, who, being posted at a considerable distance, had seen nothing of the fray. He now, as usual, lamented greatly his ill-luck. But he was much pleased at the success, and heartily congratulated Norman on the judgment and skill by means of which that success had been mainly achieved. And certainly, considering the extent of the jungle, the many outlets, and the cautious nature of the pursued, it might fairly be deemed to be as fortunate and well executed a piece of sport as had yet befallen them; perhaps, indeed, the most so.

Rugonauth was loud in his praises; and although it could not be considered as *his* tiger, professional jealousy for once gave way before an ardent desire for success, however accomplished.

After his first ungovernable outburst of triumph at the overthrow of his enemy, Roopur had become quite quiet, and now related to an interested audience the circumstances attending the affair, and his great admiration at the coolness and decision with which Norman had conducted it to so happy a conclusion.

Whether Roopur had, immediately after the death, sent off a messenger to apprise the village of the success, or whether some one had taken it upon himself to be the bearer of the glad tidings, the hunters knew not; but on their reaching their camp,

they found gathered there a number of women, who broke into a chant of welcome as they rode up. Roopur's father had been a person of consequence in the village, and it was matter of congratulation to all that his death had at last been avenged.

There was indeed much rejoicing that evening. On the skin of the tiger being removed, an old bullet wound was traced, and the lead found flattened against the bone of the shoulder, on the same side as the twisted foot. This was, in all probability, the veritable bullet which Roopur's father had driven home into the long barrel of his matchlock in full hopes of its causing the tiger's death, but which, alas! had but led to his own.

The month's leave was now fast drawing to a close; and as the hunters' efforts had been that day successful in destroying the man-killer—and possible man-eater—there remained no sufficiently strong reason to induce them to defer their proposed march on the morrow.

Orders were accordingly issued for a pack-up and start after dinner, it being decided to make a twenty mile march in the direction of cantonments, from which they were now distant some eighty or ninety miles.

It was with no little satisfaction that old Sheik Hussein received the orders to this effect. He by

no means appreciated the merits of a jungle life, and the absence of those comforts and luxuries which the cantonment or city bazaar afforded. No profound admiration of the jungle scenery, or any poetical congeniality with the wildness of nature compensated for the loss of bazaar society, the gossip of his mess-fellows, or the cheering companionship of his beloved Fatma.

Marching indeed was not to his taste, but he preferred a long plodding night-walk, so long as it led towards home, to a further stay in the jungles.

For some days past he had been nervously anxious on the subject of "extension of leave." He greatly feared the hunters might at the last be induced to apply for it; and when he heard of their resolve to wait yet another day with the object of compassing the destruction of the lame tiger, his heart sank within him. There was in reality little to be feared in this respect, the funds of the hunters being well-nigh exhausted, but of this he was not aware.

But now that the order for a move had actually been issued, he rejoiced greatly, and so much were his feelings roused, or his usual impregnable stolidity sharpened, that he actually gave birth to his first and last-born joke; though there is strong ground for believing that the delivery was effected unknown to himself.

Mr. Manuel de Souza was the individual who had the honour of being present on this occasion.

"Are you not glad, Manuel, that we are at last going back?" the Mussulman asked of his fellow "bootlair" (the native term in the Bombay Presidency by which the head functionary in an establishment is known). "I shall be very pleased to get home and out of these wild jungles. There will then be ease and comfort. I prefer a town 'bhag' (garden) to a jungle 'bagh' (tiger)."

There was some doubt if the play on the words was really intended; for certainly the dignified Mussulman's greatest enemy could never have accused him of being habitually given to such light trifling. Still there may have existed under the outward stolidity of demeanour, and unperceived by ordinary mortals, a vein of subtle wit which, as being but rarely indulged in, was on that account the more remarkable.

Manuel looked for some time at his companion as if hardly crediting the evidence of his senses, and repeated the expression made use of. Then, as it fully dawned on him that, whether designedly or not, Sheik Hussein had positively there and then, before him, been guilty of an attempt at wit, he laughed loudly, and complimented him on the light and playful nature of his character.

The following day would carry the hunters out of the wild regions where tigers and bears were to be found; and on this, the last evening of their stay in the little-cultivated tract of country where Nature predominated untrammelled and unadorned, they compared, and not to its disadvantage, their wild, free life in the woods with that of habitual dwellers in towns.

They knew that life has other duties besides those of exterminating the beasts of the forest; but they felt that they should return to such duties as fell to their lot, the better for the month of freedom, and the exercise of those manly qualities which the invigorating pursuit of sport calls into action.

Courage, nerve, presence of mind, activity, resolution, and decision had been all, more or less, exercised and fostered by the prosecution of their campaign. Moreover, the natural energy and craving for action — inherent qualities in most Englishmen of healthy organisation — had found full scope for their employment, without the deteriorating effect too often produced by their devotion to other and less healthy town pursuits.

Again the young moon looked smilingly down on the little camp, now in all the bustle of preparation for departure, as the hunters sat outside after

dinner, and enjoyed their chat over the events of the day, of the campaign generally, and remarked on the advantages of such pleasant jungle trips.

How many a happy association is connected with those joyous hours, and how many a sincere friendship can be traced to the unreserved and genial interchange of thought engendered by the prosecution in common of a manly occupation, and the facing of a common risk. No insincerity and dissimulation mark such intercourse. Men learn to know each other with something more than the superficial knowledge by which man so frequently rules his estimation of his fellows. Many a latent quality is developed or discovered, and regard and affection contracted for the acquaintance you have learnt to understand after penetrating the outer crust of his nature. Those, whose adventures I have been describing, were no heroes; they were, on the whole, good-natured fellows enough, but cast in no uncommon mould. And being such, I have not endeavoured to wrap their adventures in any veil of mock heroism. They were keen sportsmen, and practically conversant with the habits of the game they pursued; but, I regret to add, were theoretically and scientifically but poor naturalists.

Some such considerations as I have above detailed

formed the subject of their conversation as they enjoyed the quiet after-dinner Manillas. They were unanimous in agreeing that they had enjoyed a very pleasurable month and a fair amount of good sport.

It is often customary to award the skin of the animal shot to the hunter who is fortunate enough to give the first wound. But our party had determined to make an equal division of the spoils, as being the fairest and most just to all, and less provocative of disputed shots. The peltries now amounted to a considerable number, and Hawkes counted with satisfaction a goodly array of bottles full of grease, the careful packing of which in an old beer-box he himself superintended. The consumption of the liquids and other stores gave room on the camels for the bestowal of these proceeds of the chase, to the compact and proper arrangement of which all had paid much attention.

One last inspection was given as the camels filed past after being loaded; and the little troop, receiving the order to march, soon vanished on the road into the plains, leaving the hunters, as usual, with the mere necessaries for their night's rest.

The hills were standing strongly defined against the waning moon, with every rock and tree on their

tops set black in the pale light, as the baggage moved off; and the hunters soon afterwards sought their beds; and the sighing night wind, and the wild jungle sounds of beast, bird, and insect formed their lullaby.

CHAPTER XXIII.

En route to the Plains—Wolves Hunting—Fastidiousness in Sport of Indian Hunters—A Bag on the Rear-Guard—A Wolf 's Tail and a Neilghye's Tongue—Riding post in India.

As the march was a good twenty miles, the travellers had ordered their second horses to be placed half-way, so that they might, without over-exerting their animals, ride the distance at a fair pace throughout.

Roopur, who had been well rewarded, with many of the villagers, came to see them off. Mackenzie had taken good care to ascertain that all just and legitimate demands had been settled in full ; and the people, though probably demanding more than they were entitled to—after the manner of natives generally—knew that justice had been done.

As the hunters mounted in the early dawn, and rode by the village mid much salaaming, the women again struck up their chant, and offered to the passing travellers some jungle flowers. A small

present was distributed amongst them, and the horsemen cantered off.

Their ride was unmarked by any circumstance deserving of note, save one. They had eased their horses in crossing over a stony range of low hills, dotted with clumps and separate bushes of the prickly pear; and the rearmost riders had closed up from the long distances at which respectively they rode behind the leader, when a couple of gazelles bounded across the road just in front. They were evidently wearied and panting, and so startled as to take no notice of the hunters, who looked around to discover the cause. Soon a wolf appeared shuffling along at that long lobbing gallop which seems to the spectator so slow, but which in reality covers the ground at a wonderful rate. He crossed directly in the track of the deer, and just turned his head towards the horsemen as he swept past, without the slightest apparent change in his plodding monotonous gallop.

Another followed, but not so directly on the line of the deer. Another and another also appeared, until nine were counted, not galloping in a pack, but widely separate from the leader, both in line of running and distance.

Some of the hindmost appeared so little in a hurry, that they almost pulled up, and made a

détour to avoid the riders; but when once past, again set off in the general direction of those nearest in front.

The hunters watched them till concealed by a dip in the hills; and it appeared to them that the wolves were hunting, not like a pack of hounds all striving to carry the scent, but acting on a combined and settled plan of assistance one to the other. There was no racing to be first, but a determined prosecution of the pursuit, without any contentious jealousy. Each seemed ready for his share of the work when, from fatigue or a change of direction in the flight of the gazelles, the leading wolf should give up the running, or be thrown out. This was probably the reason of their keeping separate, so that advantage might at once be taken of any bending of the game to either flank. Perhaps those in the rear, also, were recruiting their strength after having surrendered to others the leading place.

The wolves were making no desperate efforts to close at once with the chase. It was evidently their intention to wear out the strength of the deer by long-continued exertion—the only way in which so fleet a creature could be outrun. Apparently, they were hunting from view, and not from scent; or perhaps rather, a combination of both.

The horsemen again viewed them as they re-

appeared and went over another hill, still at the same unwearied, relentless pace; no babbling, no contention, but acting on the dogged intention of eventually running into their prey.

"How they lob away!" remarked Mackenzie, as he turned to continue the journey. "One would hardly imagine they could ever catch the chinkara (gazelles). Yet I would back their steady, determined gallop in the long run."

"I never saw so many together before," Norman said.

"Are they not gregarious, then, in India?" asked Hawkes.

"We have seen just now that to some extent they are," was the reply. "But, commonly speaking, not more than a couple are seen together, though I have heard that they do collect in a wonderful manner for any common object. I daresay only one or two began the chase we have been looking at, and the others joined in as it went on."

"But wolves are not common in India, are they?" was Hawkes' next inquiry.

"One does not come across many, certainly. You may be years before you will see as many as we have seen to-day. But they must be very numerous in some districts. The number of deaths of children

attributed to them alone, in the Punjaub, is enormous."

"You see," observed Mackenzie, "we don't look upon wolves as much in the way of 'shikar,' and so we don't hunt for them—perhaps, indeed, hardly observe them sometimes, when, if they were more in esteem as sport, we should note the circumstance. But I remember once before seeing wolves hunting. It was on the dead level of the Runn of Cutch, in a large tract of grass-land called the 'Bunnee;' but there were only two in chase."

"It seems rather strange that wolves, and even hyænas, should be usually considered as beneath an Indian sportsman's attention. No one ever thinks, somehow, of securing their skins."

"Why, the fact is, I suppose," said Norman, "that there is so much game in this country yielding handsomer trophies, and of better fighting qualities. But, if not engaged in the pursuit of other and more attractive sport, I always bag a wolf or hyæna when I get a chance. The skin of the latter is not to be despised. There are two sorts, though—the striped and spotted. I am not certain if I ever came across the latter."

"One of the neatest shots I ever made, was at a wolf," Mackenzie said. "It was on the line of march—not on service, but moving from one station

to another. I was the officer in command of the rear-guard, which, you know, has to see that all the baggage is safe; consequently, as the march was a long one, we did not get into camp till very late. On that occasion, I had a syce beside me with my rifle. He was a sharp-sighted fellow, and declared he saw a wolf enter a patch of bushes near the road. I dismounted, and walked towards it, when out rushed the wolf at full gallop, at about eighty yards' distance. I fired, and killed him as dead as a stone, with a bullet behind the shoulder. As a trophy, I sawed off his tail with my regulation sword—a piece of old iron that was as blunt as the back of a razor. I remember that, on the same occasion, I killed a bull neilghye, and wounded a gazelle."

"Pleasant way of performing the duties of officer of the rear-guard," laughed Norman.

"The only duties were to see that everything was in front. The carts are frightfully slow, and leave lots of time for a little shikar. The neilghye took me a good hour to kill. I was following up the wounded deer, making a very cautious stalk, when I observed a bull neilghye, with several cows, approaching. I broke the fore leg of the bull, being rather low in my aim. He went away with it dangling, so I followed up, got a close running shot, and killed him dead. As it was too far to be sent

for after I reached camp, I cut out the tongue, which is the tit-bit, with the same instrument with which I had previously cut off the wolf's tail; and a precious difficult job I had of it."

"Improved its flavour, I should think! Fancy the officer in command of the rear-guard marching into camp with a neilghye's tongue on one side, and a wolf's tail on the other! Rather a remarkable apparition, and a little startling for the C. O., if he happened to be on the look-out!"

Mackenzie laughed as young Hawkes thus pictured his friend's arrival at the head of his men: and having now crossed the hill, again set off at a brisk canter. Before another hour had passed, they safely reached their camp, which had only arrived a short time previous.

They had now left the high hills and thick jungle, and entered the open plain. They proposed making one more regular march, and then, as their leave expired on the following day, riding post the remaining distance into cantonments.

For this purpose they had already written to friends to lay out horses for them. Such is the common practice in those parts of India where there are no regular made roads, mail-carts, or other dâk (post) advantages. A man can in this way, with previous arrangements, ride his hundred miles in a

day, or as far as his physical strength or convenience dictates. Numbers of tattoos are kept for hire in some of the bazaars attached to the larger stations, and these - with such assistance in private horse-flesh as friends are willing to give—easily enable an active man to cross the country rapidly. The tattoos are for the most part, it must be confessed, terrible screws, and a fall or two in the course of a day's journey is as much the rule as the exception ; but, considering their life and the state of their pins, they get over their stages, of from ten to fifteen miles, in a wonderful manner—not unfrequently without the rein being drawn.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A night Storm—Singular effect on the Fish—Antelope shooting—Shooting from horseback—In ambush—A pretty Stalk—Conclusion.

One tent was struck and the baggage dispatched as usual that evening. But the weather looked threatening, and the other—the bechoba—was retained in case of the visit of one of those wild fitful hot-weather storms such as I have before described.

Nor was this precaution taken in vain. About midnight a servant came running up to awake the gentlemen, who were as usual sleeping in the open air, and inform them that a storm was coming up, and on the point of breaking upon them. Hawkes was the first aroused. As the moon had gone down he could not see much, but he heard enough to be fully alive to the fact that the hurricane was indeed close at hand. Securing his bed, he tried to get it into the tent, but before he could do so, the blast had caught him, and knocked him right over on to the flat of his back with his bed on the top of him. A chair and a table were blown quite out of the

tent door; but the tent itself, owing to the precautions taken of securing it firmly on the previous evening, gallantly withstood the shock.

The servant had not found time to arouse Mackenzie and Norman, on whom in consequence the storm burst while they were still lying on their beds, and they had actually to exert force to retain their positions. The first fierce gust past, however, all three dragged their beds into the little bechoba, which was just large enough to contain them when carefully arranged.

For a couple of hours the rain continued to pour down in torrents; and all being wet, the remaining portion of the night was passed in decided discomfort.

Directly the sun rose everything was spread out in its rays to be dried. The tent was taken to pieces also, and subjected to the same genial influence; for in its present saturated state its weight was too greatly increased to be easily portable. The worst effect of the storm, however, was the condition to which it had brought the guns, which, only after much time and trouble, were rendered fit for use.

As the hunters intended shooting their way along the march—it being reported that antelope were plentiful—it was the more necessary to get the guns into working order, though the necessary

detention for that purpose rendered it late before they started. This they managed to do about an hour after sunrise.

The river, on which the neighbouring village stood, had come down heavily during the night, but had already commenced to run out, and, by the time the sportsmen found it was necessary to cross it by a ford a mile or two lower down, had greatly receded.

The hunters discovered, *en route*, that a rather remarkable circumstance had taken place, not only on the first river, but on another over which the road led them some distance further on. Over the shingle, and sand, and mud banks, which the water had temporarily covered, were scattered vast numbers of dead fish. They were not all small. Many were of a fair average size, none, however, being very large. This was not the case only in one particular spot, but as far as the hunters could see, all along the river's course. They were puzzled to account for it, as the water could hardly have receded with such rapidity as to leave so great a number of good-sized fish high and dry, many being now far from the water's edge. The surface supply of water from the hills being derived from mere watercourses running out almost as soon as the rain ceased, and not from springs, had, it is true, so quickly failed, as

to cause the reduction of the channel to something near its ordinary limits within the space of a few hours. It is possible this may have accounted for the circumstance. But the hunters conjectured rather that the sudden fresh, fraught with the impurities of the surface soil, or holding in solution some extraneous substance noxious to the fish, had so far affected many of those below a certain size as to cause either death or stupor. Or the sudden change in the water from a state of comparative clearness to one of singular density—laden as it was with the easily-removed scouring of the surface of the country—might have affected the respiratory organs.

However, whatever the cause, the circumstance as related is a fact, and the hunters felt by no means satisfied that it was attributable alone to the sudden fall of the full channel to its usual dimensions.

They had now entered on large alluvial plains, in many parts covered with a short dry grass and prickly scrub, the former affording pasturage to numerous herds of antelope.

As they intended to try their chance by stalking, and not by any less legitimate means,—such as approaching them behind a common cart of the country, to the sight of which they are accustomed,—

the little party separated, each taking a line of his own, so as to interfere as little as possible with his neighbour. Each had brought with him his sycc, a spear, and two or three men from the last village, and these of course now accompanied their respective masters.

Mackenzie, who was in the centre with Norman on his right, was the first to detect a nice herd of antelope, with several good bucks among them.

The appearance of the buck and doe antelope is widely dissimilar. The former has spiral annulated horns, extending in the very finest specimens to, I believe, six-and-twenty inches in length. I have never seen a pair so long, having myself only succeeded in obtaining them about twenty-four; but I have been informed such have been met with.

The buck when in maturity is very dark, almost black—indeed, the species goes by the name of "Black buck" both among English sportsmen and native shikarees—with a white belly; the head, neck, and legs being also partially black, relieved with white. Altogether he is a very handsome animal. The doe is for the most part of a rufous fawn colour, light about the belly, along which is a longitudinal stripe. She is much smaller than the buck, has no horns, and her skin is not nearly so handsome a trophy.

When Mackenzie first saw the antelope, they may have been half a mile distant, and he carefully scanned the ground to see what irregularities it presented for a stalk. His inspection did not prove by any means satisfactory, as the ground was, with the exception of a few trees and bushes, quite open. He determined, therefore, to endeavour to get near them with the assistance of his horse, which was a quiet and steady animal.

Taking his rifle in hand, and leaving the men behind, he rode towards the herd; but, when he had approached within about four hundred yards, turned his horse as if to pass them at about half that distance, or more. By these means he got to their flank, and guided his horse so as to circle round them. The deer retreated from him slowly as he moved round, but did not cease feeding. One or two, who were lying down, however, jumped up, and joined the others as they moved away from the object of their suspicion. In this way, Mackenzie made one complete circuit of the deer, gradually sidling nearer and nearer towards them; but he was not yet within fair range. They were, however, getting gradually accustomed to the sight of the horse. Again he commenced to circle round, but when about half-way, one skittish doe gave two or three preparatory jumps, all four feet striking and

leaving the ground at the same time. Mackenzie observed this sign, and knowing that it very likely foreboded an immediate departure, pulled up his old mare, who stood quite still, and singled out a fine buck, which stood broadside on, about one hundred and twenty yards distant. It was looking at the suspicious doe, as he brought his rifle to his shoulder. Raising the end sight gradually up its fore leg, till it dwelt for a moment steady when it reached the shoulder, he pulled the trigger, and the report was instantaneously followed by the "thud." The gallant buck sprang into the air, gave one long bound, and rolled over, kicking all four legs in the air as it lay prostrate and helpless.

The herd galloped away in a panic, and Mackenzie immediately cantered up to the dying buck, dismounted, tied the bridle of his well-accustomed mare to a bush, and drawing his hunting-knife, soon dispatched the beautiful creature.

Norman had, from a distance, observed Mackenzie's movements, and prepared himself to take advantage of the flight of the deer, should they fortunately make it in his direction. He had directed his attendants to squat down on the ground, behind some low bushes; and leaving them in charge of his pony, he sought the cover afforded by the stem of a solitary tree which grew at some distance, and

behind which he was able to conceal his body in an upright position.

He had seen Mackenzie fire, and, by his subsequent movements, felt assured he had done so successfully, though he was too distant to discern the actual fall of the buck.

The leading doe selected a line pretty nearly in the direction of Norman, which was observed with much delight by that gentleman, as he carefully and cautiously peered with one eye round the trunk of his tree. Long before they reached his neighbourhood, however, their bounding gallop had subsided into an easy canter.

But antelope, like other graceful creatures, are gifted with no small share of curiosity, and, not unfrequently, equally suffer for its gratification. This peculiarity is not confined to the does; for the bucks—four-legged ones—are as strongly swayed by that feminine impulse as their frailer companions.

One or two of the herd—quickly followed by the rest—suddenly wheeled round, and stood at gaze, looking earnestly in the direction of Mackenzie, endeavouring to make out his movements, and assure themselves if danger was still to be apprehended from that quarter.

Some motion of the sportsman, or glancing of

his rifle, or other cause, again startled the herd, and they resumed their flight as before, but at a greatly reduced pace. As they neared Norman's position, this had subsided into a walk, and already several had stopped here and there to nibble at the grass or the tender shoots of some bush.

Quite unaware of the proximity of a new danger, they soon steadily settled down to feed, continuing in a line which brought them on Norman's flank, at a distance of about a hundred yards. He selected a good-looking buck, with a fair pair of horns, which it every now and then tossed back with a jerk, to drive off, with its points, some fly which had settled on its black glossy coat. It was walking steadily on, with that graceful and undulatory, but sharp, decided motion, which suggests to the observer how unpleasantly rough it would be to a rider.

Though several of the does had passed his place of ambush, none had as yet discovered the lurking enemy—not easily to be discerned in the deep shade of the tree. The movement of bringing up his rifle, however, attracted their attention, and they turned quickly to look. But it was too late. In the instant of their first bound off, and before those in the rear were aware of any fresh cause of danger, the rapid aim had been taken, and the bullet sped on its way.

It took effect; but too far back to bring down the buck, which galloped off with the herd.

Norman debated with himself for a moment whether he should call for his horse and spear, and attempt to ride down the wounded animal, or mark it, and then endeavour to obtain another shot. He determined on the latter course, in order to save his horse, who had a long journey before him on the following day; for a buck, though wounded, will often give a gallop of many miles.

On a slow horse, I have, more than once, been led by a buck on three legs—with one fore leg broken below the knee—a distance which would appear wonderful to those not acquainted with the desperate exertions an antelope can make to escape.

Norman—who had often speared wounded antelopes—decided, therefore, to trust to another shot, which he hoped soon to secure, for the wounded buck was already falling to the rear. Through his binocular, he watched the herd as they shot into the air with those tremendous bounds for which they are distinguished.

The wavy heat-haze and mirage played over the surface of the plain, now stricken with the full glare and fervour of the ascending sun. The antelope became dim and indistinct in this hot mist as they continued their course towards the horizon. Their

jumps, made by striking the ground with all four feet at once, propelled them far and high; and in the dim distance, they had the appearance of being tossed one over the other as much by mere volition as by any perceptible movement. Their forms seemed weird-like and spectral as each, one after the other, was thus projected into the air, clear of the rest of the herd.

But Norman had seen, too often, the curious spectacle now presented to his gaze to let it linger on it. His attention was more particularly directed to the wounded buck, which soon showed undoubted symptoms of distress. It fell far behind the herd, and presently dropped into an uneasy canter. This was exchanged for a walk as it became aware that there was nothing in immediate pursuit. It stopped several times, hanging its head low, and finally lay down behind a thick bunch of the wild bheer—a low, prickly, berry-bearing scrub common in those plains.

Norman carefully scanned the country to leeward, and noticed a slight mound surmounted by a bush which rose from the plain at a distance of from eighty to one hundred yards from the deer. This he thought was sufficiently high to conceal the approach of the stalker, provided he kept his body very low.

After loading his rifle, he motioned to his men to remain where they were, and then went off with his weapon at the trail, with the object of endeavouring to work round till he got the mound between the buck and himself.

Making a considerable circuit, he managed to bring a tree nearly in a line with the mound and the deer beyond. For this he then made direct.

Once, before he attained this position, the buck—who had been lying with its head and neck stretched out in front and resting on the ground—raised its head, and eyed the distant figure. Norman, on perceiving this, kept on walking, but partly away from the suspicious creature. After a brief inspection, apparently satisfied, it resumed its former position, and Norman reached the tree without again exciting its distrust.

All this had been simple and easy work; but now came the difficult task of approaching the deer by a stalk behind the mound.

The first fifty yards he saw would have to be gone over in snake fashion, and he prepared himself for the exertion.

Stopping the muzzle of his rifle with a piece of cloth, to prevent the dirt getting into the barrel, he lay down behind the tree.

To a very stout man, or one deficient in wind, the

task would have been impossible ; but Norman was naturally lean, sound in wind and limb, and from the training he had undergone during the past month, was in very good condition.

Lying on his side he worked out from behind the stem of the tree. Clear of this, he pushed his rifle in front, and then drawing up his legs sideways thrust his body forward. Rarely raising his head more than a few inches from the ground, and then only to bring his eyes on a level with the top of the mound, he advanced by successive efforts of this nature, till he thought he could without danger assume a less trying position.

Once while moving in this snake-like manner he had seen the tips of the deer's horns rise above the bush, and by their position, knew that it was looking in his direction. It evidently had some suspicion of the vicinity of danger, though it was unable to detect it. Norman lay quite flat and motionless till the horns disappeared, and then recommenced his trying, tedious course.

As he approached the mound, he found that he was able to change his posture to a crawling one, and still keep his body concealed. But all his trouble and caution appeared likely to be of no avail. Again the horns rose over the bush, and Norman, once more extending himself at full length,

looked from beneath the long rim of his light grass-made cap. He saw that the buck had risen, and was gazing steadfastly towards him. Seeing no movement, yet apparently still but half satisfied, it walked away,—fortunately in a direction almost exactly away from the mound,—then turned again to look. But this time its gaze was very brief. It soon hung its head, then once more, with evident pain, sank on its knees and lay down.

Norman waited a full minute and then recommenced his stalk. By crawling, and waddling with his knees bent double and his body carried low, he at last managed to reach the mound without again exciting the distrust of the antelope. But his chest was heaving, and he was shaking all over from the effect of his exertions. He therefore lay at length behind the mound, without making any attempt to peer through the bush, till he felt satisfied that he had acquired sufficient steadiness.

Many a head of game had he lost in his novitiate from over eagerness, when with every fibre of his body trembling, he had fired in the excitement of finding himself so near, without pausing to recover the calmness lost during the stalk. But experience and practice had brought judgment, and power to restrain the natural eagerness. When he felt that his steadiness had returned, he unstopped the rifle,

and raised himself slowly and gradually till he was able to look through the small bush. Inch by inch the rifle was then brought up, and presented through an opening in the foliage till the object was covered. Just as he was about to fire, the buck quickly raised its head, and turned it towards him; but before it could spring up, a bullet passed through its shoulder, and it lay struggling on the ground.

Norman jumped up and ran forward. Seizing the deer's horns,—though nearly shaken off in the attempt,—he managed to put an end to the poor beast with his hunting-knife.

This was the only shot Norman obtained. By twelve o'clock all had reached the camp, Mackenzie having killed another black buck, and Hawkes a gazelle, but without any particulars attending their deaths worth recording here.

On the following day their leave expired; so bidding adieu to jungle pleasures, they rode towards cantonments, which they reached without mishap or adventure, well satisfied with the success attending the month's campaign of the Eastern Hunters.

REMARKS ON ANIMALS MENTIONED IN THE WORK.

LION (*Leo gujratensis*).—The Lion of India is, I believe, confined exclusively to the province of Kattiawar and the borders of Guzerat and Rajpootana. The "Bengal Lion" is referred to in some works on natural history, but I am not aware that it is found anywhere in Bengal.

The male is nearly maneless, and generally inferior in size and appearance to its African brother. Tigers are, however, said to avoid them, and desert those jungles in which any roving lion may make his appearance. In Kattiawar, the district they most affect, tigers are unknown, though panthers are common.

TIGER (*Felis tigris*).—Found throughout the hills and jungles of India. Full-grown specimens vary considerably in size, colour, and markings, but are considered to be of one species.

LEOPARD, PANTHER, CHEETUR (*Felis leopardus, Leopardus varius*).—There is considerable confusion in the use of these names among sportsmen in India. Cheetur is sometimes applied to all.

There would seem to be at least four varieties of spotted cats, besides such rare animals as the snow leopard of the Himalayas, and the black panther. The latter is probably only a very dark specimen of the common kind.

The two large animals which are indiscriminately

called panther and leopard, differ so much in marking and appearance as to make them, to the unscientific eye, distinct species. May not the lighter coloured of the two, —the ground of which is of a light tawny yellow, shaded into white at the belly inside of legs, neck, and chest — be the ounce (*Leopardus uncia*), said to be an inhabitant of Persia and other Asiatic countries; and the darker the true panther? I merely make this as a suggestion to my sporting readers.

Besides these, there appears to be the small spotted cat called "cheetur," which preys on dogs and small animals, but is quite unequal to cope with a bullock. The spots on its body are nearly complete spots, and not rings as in the panther.

The hunting leopard (*Felis jubata*, *Guepardu jubata*), the fourth on the list, is of course quite distinct. It seems to be a sort of connecting link between the dog and cat. Its claws are only partially retractile. Many of the native princes keep these animals and train them for the purpose of hunting antelopes. I make these observations for the consideration of my brother sportsmen, some of whom have, perhaps long ago, correctly defined the different varieties.

Bear (*Ursus labiatus*).—The black, or, as it is sometimes called, the horse-shoe bear, is found throughout India, and in Cashmere, and the Himalayan mountains. Its chest is marked by a semicircular band of white or pale buff, somewhat in the shape of a horse-shoe.

The adventures with, and anecdotes of this animal, recorded in these pages, illustrate its nature and habits.

Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*, *Sus aper*) is found throughout India. It is, I believe, somewhat smaller than the wild

boar of Europe. Its tusks,—greatly prized by the hog-hunter as the trophy of the hard won tussle for first spear,—vary, in the full grown animal, from six or seven to ten inches. Of this, however, only from a third to one half appears beyond the gum.

The term "sounder," properly speaking applied only to a single animal of a certain age, is used by the Indian sportsman to describe a whole herd.

HYÆNA (*Hyæna striata*).—The striped hyæna is that usually met with in India. It is a cowardly beast, and affords no sport to the gunner; and, consequently, is but little sought for. It is occasionally ridden down and speared, and gives a good run.

WOLF (*Canis lupus*).—The wolf of India is not so fierce or strong an animal as that of Northern Europe, and rarely attacks man, though very young children are sometimes carried off. They do not habitually hunt in packs, but the circumstance of their doing so, as related, I myself saw.

SAMBER (*Cervus aristotelis*).—The largest of the deer tribe, which is common to all parts of India. In Cashmere, the noble Barasingha, and some other allied species in Assam, and the South Eastern parts of Bengal, can compete with this fine animal in size and appearance; but they are not distributed generally as is the samber. The horn of the stag is three-tyned, and when mature very massive.

Its skin, when dressed as leather, is in great esteem for the manufacture of shoes, belts, saddle covers, and numerous other things. It is far softer, yet tougher, than common cow leather; and in consequence articles made of it fetch a higher price.

Neilghye.—I find this animal described in an old book on Natural History, as "*Antilope picta*." This appears to be a misnomer.

The bull, properly Neilghau—"Blue bull"—is of a grey slaty blue, and has short black horns, not unlike those of the short-horn breeds of oxen only smaller. The cow is smaller than the bull, and of a dun colour. Its appearance is essentially that of wild cattle, though approaching the deer in the fineness of its head and limbs. They have a slight hump at the withers.

It is not only an inhabitant of the jungles, but roams over some of the open plains and fields and is occasionally ridden down and speared by English sportsmen. They rove in small herds of half-a-dozen, or thereabouts, and sometimes the bull is found alone.

The skin of the bull is very thick and tough and in demand as furnishing, from the neck and chest, an excellent material for the manufacture of native shields.

There would appear to be three kinds of wild cattle in India—the Bison, the Wild Buffalo, and the Neilghye. The latter is far the inferior in size and ferocity.

Cheetul (*Cervus axis*), the Spotted Deer of India, is a beautiful creature, not unlike the Fallow Deer, but I think, rather smaller, and with some difference in the form of the horns. They do not appear to be quite so generally distributed as the Sambur, but in many districts are far more plentiful. They go in herds of from six to sixty. I have heard of as many as six being killed by one gun during the brief cool stalking-hours of the morning and evening.

Antelope (Kala Hurun of the natives, Black Buck of the English Sportsman).—I have described this animal in

the body of the work. It roams in vast herds over the open plains of India, and if much disturbed, collects to the number of many hundreds. It is a beautiful creature, and being for the most part only found in the open flat country, affords good opportunities of testing the sportsman's skill and woodcraft when stalking them. This is the most legitimate manner of approaching them; but, owing to the open character of the ground they seek, other means are frequently employed. Carts, camels, horses, and bullocks, trained for the purpose, are used. The Black Buck has occasionally been run down, and speared from horseback, but this is a feat not often accomplished.

Many years ago, the sportsmen of the large station of Poona, in the Bombay Presidency, were in the habit of assembling to ride down and spear half-grown antelopes; but even these often escaped, or gave such runs that but one or two were up at the finish. It was rather cruel work, and, as a sport, never came into much favour.

Antelope, both male and female, completely white, have been seen, and shot. But these albinoes, I need hardly say, are of very rare occurrence.

Gazelle.—The Chinkara of the English and native sportsman, is, I presume, the "*Gazella dorcas*." It is met generally on the plains and low open hills of India. In many parts it especially affects the nullahs and stony eminences which diversify the plain. The horns of the male are annulated, and twist back with a slight but graceful curve. They are ten or twelve inches in length. The doe has horns also, but much smaller in every way than those of the buck. They are not annulated, and are sometimes strangely distorted, without any approach to

regularity of appearance. They roam in herds of six or eight.

I have found them most abundant in the province of Cutch, though elsewhere and strange to say the antelope is not seen there, though across the gulf on the coast of Kattiawar, they abound.

Hare. The Indian hare is similar to that of England but far inferior in size.

Pea-fowl — Jungle-fowl — Spur-fowl. — In many parts of India the pea-fowl live in a semi-domestic state in and about the villages. Being deemed sacred they are unmolested. The wild pea-fowl of the jungles is a better bird for the table and when young is not unacceptable food.

The jungle fowl is about the size of a bantam, and is probably the original stock, though said to be incapable of being domesticated.

The spur-fowl is much smaller, and not nearly so handsome a bird, of the order *Rasores*.

Partridges. There are three kinds indigenous to the plains of India. Black, painted and grey they are called by the Indian sportsmen. The last mentioned, the least handsome of the three, and far inferior to the English, had the most nearly approached it in appearance. The black excels all in splendour of plumage. The call of the black and painted partridge is very similar, both as well as that of the grey differing from that of the English bird.

In the Bombay Presidency I have never met the black partridge south of Cutch, that is of about the tropical line. It is abundant north of it in Scinde, but would appear to be replaced by the painted further south. The flesh of all the partridges in India is white, and far

legged bird.

perienced sportsman.

THE END.

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